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# HISTORY, ETHNOGRAPHY, AND THE NATION: THE FILMS OF SCOTLAND DOCUMENTARIES

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of the Open University for the  
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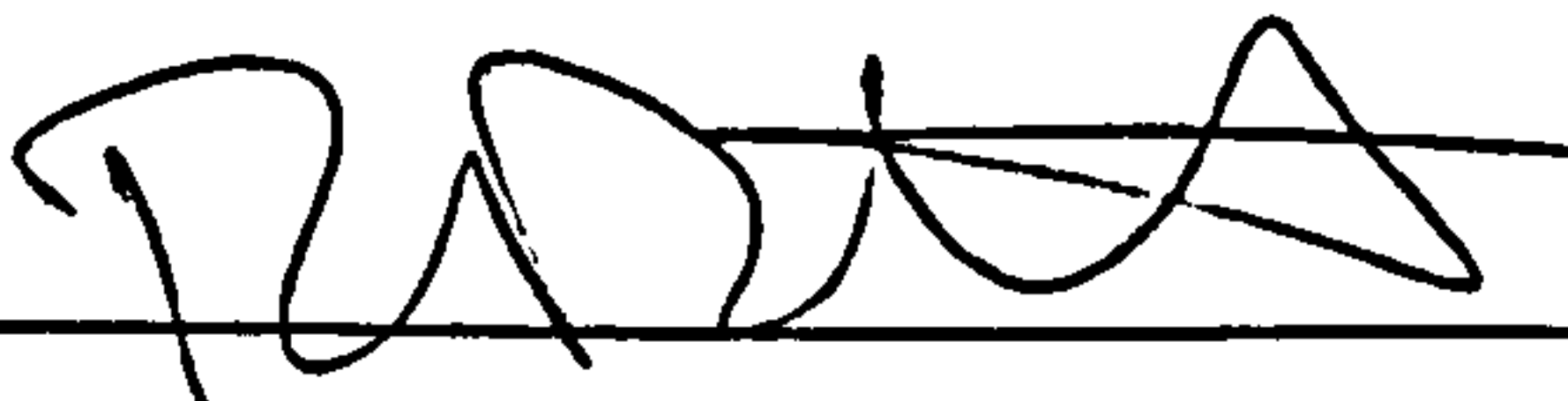
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## **ABSTRACT**

The Films of Scotland Committee (1938 and 1954-82) produced one hundred and sixty eight documentaries on Scotland and Scottish life; the thesis is an archaeology of those documentaries. The thesis breaks from a film theory discourse that has marginalised documentary to argue that the genre should be understood as a cultural technology, an exhibitionary apparatus that draws on a variety of discursive formations in its production of knowledge. Similarly, the thesis argues that the representation of Scotland should not be understood as an aesthetic failure to represent the reality of life in Scotland, but as a distinct discursive practice that emerged at a specific historical period, a practice regulated by the rules of formation of the discourses within which it operates.

The thesis outlines the history of Scottish film culture before 1938, and examines the formation of the Committee by the Scottish Office, arguing that this needs to be understood in relation to the history of public cultural policy in Britain since the mid-nineteenth century. It examines the Committee's commitment to 'the national interest', and its relation to the mechanics and legitimation of state authority. A discursive analysis of *The Face of Scotland* (1938) begins to identify the discursive regimes on which Films of Scotland documentaries draw in their production of knowledge. The thesis argues that this film occupies a space of representation opened up by the discursive formations of ethnography and history, and a discourse of nationhood, and traces the formation of this space by looking at the earlier surfaces of emergence of these discourses. It also begins to suggest the ways in which these discourses engage with the construction of cultural and national identities.

Arguing that the figure of the tour is central to the Films of Scotland documentaries, the thesis traces the emergence of the tour as a cultural technology in Scotland from the eighteenth century travel writing of Martin Martin and Boswell and Johnson, to the apparatuses of tourism established by Thomas Cook. The last part of the thesis focuses on the travelogue as a sub-genre of documentary, mapping out both the technologies of vision on which it draws, and its generic 'regime of verisimilitude', structured, it is argued, by an oscillation between the discourses of history and ethnography. Finally the thesis argues

that what remains hegemonic in Scottish culture are not particular images and narratives, but the very concept of national culture itself, and the nature, rather than the content, of national identity.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Films of Scotland Committee (1938 and 1954-82) produced one hundred and sixty eight documentaries on Scotland and Scottish life; this thesis is an archaeology of those documentaries. The Films of Scotland documentaries are the central object of this thesis for a number of reasons. The first of these is practical. The thesis takes its place amongst a recent growth in interest in both documentary film (cf. Nichols, 1991; Renov, 1993) and the representation of Scotland (cf. Womack, 1989; McCrone, Morris, & Kiely, 1995). Yet despite this interest, and despite the Committee's dominance of Scottish film production for almost thirty years, the set of films produced by the Committee has not been well documented or commented on; this critical absence constitutes one of the main themes of the first two chapters. The Committee's work is readily available for research. Almost all the documentaries are now held in a number of formats at the Scottish Film Archive in Glasgow, which also holds original documentation on the Committee's operation and production, and further documentation is held at the Grierson Archive in Stirling. Nevertheless, Films of Scotland have been largely overlooked in academic histories of film, which it is a primary aim of this thesis to redress.

The documentaries also constitute an object of theoretical interest. The Films of Scotland documentaries engage with life in different parts of Scotland, representing it for a public audience. Yet their attempts to do so have been met academically with dismissive criticism. For instance, Colin McArthur (1982) accuses them of giving 'new and monstrous life to the discourses of Tartanry and Kailyard' (p. 58); why Tartanry and Kailyard might be seen as 'monstrous' is the subject of the second chapter. However, this negative approach is by no means peculiar to the Films of Scotland documentaries, but is in fact common to discussion of the documentary within Film Studies in the 1970s and 1980s. It seems extraordinary to imagine that committed film makers from a variety of countries, along with their audiences, were all somehow duped or acting in bad faith. Accordingly, it is part of the aim of the first two chapters to account for this polarisation of position, not by establishing who is right and who is wrong, but by situating the critique of documentary within its institutional context, opening up an alternative to the generally

negative way in which both documentary film and the representation of Scotland have been discussed in the past.

A further theoretical interest is provided by the particular nature of the institutional formation and mode of operation of the Films of Scotland Committee. This formation, discussed in Chapter Three, allows us to pose a series of questions about the relations between film and cultural policy, nationhood, and tourism. Nationhood and cultural policy continue to be key areas of debate in Media Studies, while the importance of tourism to Scotland's economy guarantees its central place in corporate and public debate. An additional historical interest is provided by the identity of the film makers involved in the production of the documentaries. The people involved in the production of the 1938 films include figures associated with the British documentary movement, such as John Grierson, Basil Wright, Alexandra Shaw, Walter Elliot, and Stuart Legg; while the production of the second Committee served as a training ground for film makers such as Bill Forsyth, Oscar Marzaroli, and Murray Grigor. While the range of individual film makers and production companies involved no doubt contributed to the aesthetic diversity of the Committees documentaries, in this instance we are principally interested in their shared institutional location.

More generally, a thesis on the media is partially legitimated by the ever increasing significance of the media in our everyday lives, as one of the defining features of the period of 'modernity'. In particular, documentaries, along with other non-fiction formats, play a crucial role in the modern public sphere, subjecting an ever increasing field of objects to public scrutiny. In doing so, they are primarily involved in the production of knowledge. The nature of this knowledge, and the authority to produce it, are the central concerns of this thesis. Consequently, this thesis is not a *history* of Scottish documentary film as such, a history of Films of Scotland, of the representation of Scotland, or a history of tourism in Scotland. Rather, it is an *archaeology* of those discourses, technologies and institutions on which the Films of Scotland documentaries draw and within which they operate in their production of knowledge about Scotland. Our enquiry is not restricted to film, it also visits painting, journals, travel writing, photography, and tourism. Indeed, the thesis is not so



much interested in 'texts' as in 'practices', and the thesis argues that the various films, books, and photographs discussed should be understood not as unified objects but as part of a complex cultural technology.

While the thesis draws on a range of theorists from a number of different disciplines, its general approach is particularly indebted to the work of Michel Foucault and his various 'archaeologies' of knowledge. The thesis locates itself within a general movement within the Humanities that Foucault (1972) argues has been taking place since 1969:

Now, through a mutation that is not of very recent origin, but which has still not come to an end, history has altered its position in relation to the document: it has taken as its primary task, not the interpretation of the document, nor the attempt to decide whether it is telling the truth or what is its expressive value, but to work on it from within and to develop it: history now organises the document, divides it up, distributes it, orders it, arranges it in levels, establishes series, distinguishes between what is relevant and what is not, discovers elements, defines unities, describes relations (pp. 6-7).

Following Foucault, we might characterise this shift in methodology as a shift from hermeneutics, the interpretation of the document, to archaeology, 'the intrinsic description of the monument' (p. 7).

However, the 'documents' I am concerned with occupy an operational space quite unlike those spaces discussed by Foucault. Whereas Foucault was concerned with documents whose operational space can be easily specified, the clinic, the penitentiary, the asylum and so on, the Films of Scotland documentaries occupy a space that is far less certain. If we had to name a specific physical space it would probably be the cinema, but this is far from unproblematic, in that it merely specifies the site of consumption rather than production, and fails to account for those exceptions when, towards the end of the Committee's activities, some documentaries were screened on domestic television. Equally, if we were to specify the mass media as the documentaries' institutional site, the problems of inclusion and exclusion remain; the mass media incorporate a variety of practices which we can safely say have no relation to the FoS documentaries whatsoever (eg. sitcoms, weather forecasts) while they don't contain practices that I will argue are intimately related to the documentaries (eg. still photography, the museum, travel writing). The problem is that the documentaries do not speak from an easily identifiable institutional site.

If I am attempting to follow Foucault's archaeological method, is an inquiry into such a space legitimate? In *Madness and Civilisation*, *The Order of Things*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, and indeed in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* itself, Foucault is exclusively concerned with the episteme. In other words, the discourses Foucault is interested in produce particular kinds of statement that have a different status to those found in the discourses of popular culture or everyday speech. As Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) explain:

Foucault is interested in just those types of speech acts which are divorced from the local situation of assertion and from the shared everyday background so as to constitute a relatively autonomous realm. (Just how autonomous will be the subject of later discussion). Such speech acts gain their autonomy by passing some sort of institutional test, such as the rules of dialectical argument, inquisitional interrogation, or empirical confirmation (p. 48).

Dreyfus and Rabinow call this subset of statements 'serious speech acts', to clarify their status as that rarity of statements whose truth claims are both systematic and institutionalised, and therefore count as knowledge that can be reproduced. The question that concerns us here is the extent to which statements made in documentary films can be classed as serious speech acts, for if they cannot, then surely it is illegitimate to attempt to apply Foucault's archaeological method to the Films of Scotland documentaries? On the face of it, this appears rather problematic. Operating outside both traditional academic disciplines and a singular institutional site, the range of discourses on which these documentaries could draw is potentially quite extensive. Since their operation is apparently not confined by disciplinary boundaries or professional concerns, it would appear unlikely that their statements would be either systematic or institutionalised in the way Dreyfus and Rabinow have discussed. As we will argue in Chapter One, the cinema is a relatively youthful medium which wilfully appropriates the genres and conventions of older cultural practices, such as: the music-hall, the dime novel, landscape painting and so on. However, I want to argue that this is less of a problem than it appears for three key reasons.

Firstly, the question of whether the archaeological description of discursive formations can be pursued in domains other than the human sciences is the final question Foucault poses



in his book on the archaeology of knowledge:

To the question posed above - Is archaeology concerned only with sciences? Is it always an analysis of scientific discourse? - we can now give a reply, in each case in the negative. What archaeology tries to describe is not the specific structure of science, but the very different domain of *knowledge*. Moreover, although it is concerned with knowledge in its relation to epistemological figures and the sciences, it may also question knowledge in a different direction and describe it in a different set of relations (p. 195).

Foucault's distinction between science and knowledge allows for the investigation of other kinds of domains in which the production of knowledge takes place. One such domain, I want to argue, would be the mass media. Indeed some commentators (cf. Best & Kellner, 1991, pp. 52-3) have argued that it is a curious lacuna in Foucault's work that he fails to address the mass media, given their formative role in the twentieth century.

Secondly, as we will see in Chapter One, a number of theorists argue that not only do documentaries themselves belong to the serious genres of filmmaking, but also that the statements they make draw on particular discursive formations. Further, as I will demonstrate in Chapter Three, these particular documentaries *do* exist in relation to an institutional site, the state, and they do operate under stated institutional aims, suggesting that their statements about Scotland may be more systematic than we might originally have suspected. One of the aims of this thesis is to establish if there is in fact a limit to the discourses on which these documents draw.

Finally, as Dreyfus and Rabinow signal, there is serious doubt as to just how autonomous Foucault's serious speech acts actually are. The rarity of the serious speech act or statement is threatened by the fact that, as they argue, 'any culture in which methods allow privileged speakers to speak with authority beyond the range of their merely personal situation and power could be the subject of an archaeological study' (p. 48). Actuality programming on television is full of such communities of experts with their own validated procedures. Again, the documentary film theory reviewed in Chapter One is particularly concerned with the authority of documentary narration and its claim of a privileged access to the truth. The rarity of serious speech acts is also threatened by the fact that 'Foucault claims that our culture has a tendency to convert more and more of our everyday speech

acts into serious ones' (p. 48). With its rarity threatened, the autonomy of the serious speech act is compromised, a fact indicated by the theoretical and methodological shift in Foucault's own work after the publication of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

While the object of our study is the Films of Scotland documentaries, it should be clear that this in no way credits those documentaries with any sort of privileged status within the production of knowledge about Scotland. Indeed, I might have asked a number of the same questions of a different object of study. Instead of the documentary we might have taken cartography. We might have looked at The Roy Map produced by the Military Survey of Scotland of 1747-1755, which Whittington and Gibson (1986) argue is probably the earliest uniform map of the Scottish mainland and islands, and the Ordnance Survey's national land-use survey of 1855-1918 (cf. Harley, 1979). Harley (1988), drawing on Foucault, has argued that maps may be seen as a form of discourse, that cartography is both 'a form of knowledge and a form of power' (p. 279). Equally, I must stress that I am not suggesting that the Films of Scotland documentaries are in any way representative of the heterogeneous field of documentary production in general. Even within the Scottish context, for example, there is a radical difference between the Committee's documentaries, produced at an arm's length from the state, and those produced by the Workers' Film Societies (cf. Allen, 1982), or for the Scottish Co-operative Society.

However, through its analysis of the work of Films of Scotland, the thesis is able to offer a critique of the dominant way in which documentary film and the representation of Scotland have been discussed by theorists and cultural critics, arguing that we need to rethink our approach to these subjects. In particular, it argues that the representation of Scotland in documentary film should not be understood as an aesthetic failure to represent the reality of life in Scotland, but as a distinct discursive practice that emerged at a specific historical period, a practice regulated by the rules of formation of the discourses within which it operates. It argues for a historical understanding of this practice, unconfined by contemporary disciplinary divisions; and in its archaeology of documentary discourse, it allows us to explore the possibility that the documentary is a particular apparatus of



exhibition which serves a wide variety of functions.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter One argues that the discourse within which film theory operates, and the particular criteria used to discuss documentary, has resulted in the marginalisation of the genre within film theory. Chapter Two reviews the largely negative critique of the representation of Scotland, examining the extent to which theorists acknowledge the possibility of a relation between the representation of Scotland and representational strategies outside the national space, and arguing for a reorientation in their approach to textual analysis. In Chapter Three, we are interested in the way that particular institutional configurations have constructed versions of Scottishness. The first part of the chapter outlines the formation of the Committee and its place in Scottish film production. The second examines the Committee's commitment to 'the national interest', and its relation to the mechanics and legitimation of state authority.

In order to begin to identify the discursive regimes on which FoS documentaries draw in their production of knowledge about Scotland, Chapter Four offers a textual analysis of one of the earliest films produced by the Committee, *The Face of Scotland* (1938). This film occupies a space of representation opened up by the discursive formations of ethnography and history, and a discourse of nationhood, and Chapter Four traces the formation of this space by looking at the earlier surfaces of emergence of these discourses, the objects they select, the subjects they produce, and the concepts they bring into play. It also begins to suggest the ways in which these discourses engage with the construction of cultural and national identities. What is of particular interest is the centrality to these surfaces of the figure of the tour, and in subsequent chapters, as we trace the connections between a distinctive series of representations of Scotland and the increasingly familiar technology of the tour, we move from film to the printed word, to photography, and to other techniques of illustration. As almost half of the films produced by the second Films of Scotland Committee were travelogues, Chapter Six focuses on this genre, attempting to map out its 'regime of verisimilitude', the technologies of vision on which it draws, and its relation to the discourses of history and ethnography.



## Chapter 1

### Documentary Film Theory

The Films of Scotland Committee (1938 and 1954-82) produced one hundred and sixty eight documentaries on Scotland and Scottish life. Yet, unlike the British documentary movement, the set of films produced by the Committee has not been well documented or commented on, why should this be the case? The Committee's total output exceeds that of the British documentary movement, the films were widely distributed in Britain and overseas, and many of the names associated with the documentary movement are common to the Committee. Further, as I have indicated, the films are readily available for research. If the Committee's documentaries fulfil all the most obvious criteria for academic attention, what criteria have resulted in their marginalisation?

It is not only the work of the Committee that has been marginalised, for while documentary film makers have consistently reflected on their own film making practice (cf. Rosenthal, 1980), documentary film has until recently received only a fraction of the critical and historical attention attracted by the fiction film. The marginalisation of the documentary in film studies discourse in the 1970s and 1980s also applies to other forms of film outside mainstream commercial cinema; experimental film, the news-reel and so on. Neale (1987) summarises this state of affairs as follows:

the practices that constitute mainstream commercial cinema are massively dominant and therefore have a social presence and a social impact far in excess of any others. Indeed, not only do they provide the baseline in relation to which the others find their definition (as 'avant-garde', as 'political', as 'art', or whatever), but in doing so, they provide the terms and the examples in relation to which cinema itself - its forms and meanings, possibilities and pleasures - is both defined and understood. (p. 19)

As this chapter will demonstrate, Neale's point is borne out by the discourse surrounding the documentary film throughout its history. It is part of a group of forms defined in negative opposition to fiction, as 'non-fiction', and this term itself becomes the subject of much critical debate as theorists paradoxically demonstrate that the non-fiction genre of documentary is in fact fiction. This discourse is dominated by one particular term, realism, a term applied to documentary with debilitating results.



The neglect of documentary film within critical theory has not gone unnoticed, and this fact is usually the starting point for books and articles seeking to engage with the genre. Introducing a collection of essays on documentary, Michael Renov (1993) quotes one of the earliest and most influential film theorists, Christian Metz, who argues that all of the non narrative genres 'have become marginal provinces, border regions so to speak, while the *feature-length film of novelistic fiction*, which is simply called a "film", - the usage is significant - has traced more and more clearly the king's highway of filmic expression' (qtd. in Renov, p. 1). Metz's point about the use of the term 'film' is useful, because it begins to suggest the way in which the marginalisation of documentary is bound up with the institutional, journalistic and academic discourse on film. This is one of the points taken up by Bill Nichols (1991) in his preface to his own collection of essays on documentary:

Despite the significant degree of commitment to a cinema of political contestation and social transformation among both filmmakers and critics since the late 1960s, the most explicitly political film form, documentary, has received negligible attention compared to the enormous outpouring of work on narrative fiction. The rise of academic film studies within the context of literature and the humanities rather than sociology and the social sciences has considerable bearing, but so does the popular disposition to associate movies with feature films and to associate feature fiction with questions of art, entertainment, and its effects. (p. x)

Together, the points made by Metz and Nichols suggest that despite the wealth of documentary texts available for analysis, film studies has produced a discourse on film whose conceptual field has succeeded in excluding the documentary from discussion. Further, when documentary is discussed, the subject of the documentary is neglected and the style of the text is found wanting.

As stated, one of the few exceptions to the absence of work on documentary film has been the British documentary movement, which has, since its inception, been the subject of considerable written interest, from those involved in its production and film historians alike (cf. Hardy (ed.), 1979; Aitken, 1992). In an article on British documentary in the 1930s Annette Kuhn (1980) questions 'the precise criteria which have presided over the construction of the history of the British documentary movement' (p. 25). The key criteria for inclusion, she argues, is 'a somewhat problematic notion of "realism"' (p. 24). She suggests that a recontextualisation of the movement is necessary, a reorientation that would



demand a reconsideration of the critical categories, notably 'realism', which have hitherto informed the understanding of some of the films concerned and have relegated others to the marginal and dehistoricised status of 'experiments' (p. 33). Kuhn's argument that certain films have been marginalised in the study of documentary because of the criteria that have been marshalled in that study, particularly that of realism, seems pertinent with regard to the Films of Scotland documentaries, the vast majority of which mobilise realist strategies.

However, I want to take this contention one stage further and argue that it is film studies' preoccupation with questions of realism in general that is the root of the problem, and that it was film studies preoccupation with questions of realism in the 1970s that resulted in the marginalisation of documentary film within film theory discourse. Within the film realism debate, documentary is seen to be ideologically complicit, claiming to offer unmediated access to the real. Documentaries, that is, are 'devious' representations, passing off what is highly mediated as unmediated. One of the questions I want to pose is whether it is possible to say anything meaningful about documentary within a discourse of film theory preoccupied by questions of realism. If it is not, then this may partly explain why documentary film, including those produced by Films of Scotland, has suffered significant neglect as a subject of academic analysis. Kuhn also argues that one of the consequences of the dominant representation of British documentary 'is that the possibility of there being a relation between the forms of cinematic representation associated with the documentary movement and those prevailing in other historical moments or institutions remains generally unacknowledged' (p. 204). Again, this chapter will consider the extent to which theorists have explored the existence of such a relation. The first section of this chapter sketches the emergence of the question of realism in film theory, and the dominance of the anti-realism debate that followed, and recent critiques of that debate. The second section reviews documentary theorists who have moved beyond the question of realism altogether, suggesting relations between documentary and other non-fiction formations, before considering the question of whether documentary can be considered a genre in its own right.

## PART ONE: THE DOCUMENTARY AND REALISM

In this part of the chapter I want to suggest that the central place of questions of realism in film theory, at its height in the debates of the 1970s and still felt in film studies today, produced a discourse that marginalised the study of documentary film and left a critical space where it was always already damned. This critical space made its way in opposition to earlier work on cinema in the 1950s and 60s, work that explored and celebrated the ontological relation between the representation of reality on film and real-life itself (cf. Kracauer, 1960). For instance, André Bazin (1967) argued that realism was the prime drive in the history of art, and that cinema was its 'furthestmost evolution to date' (p. 10). Film's mobilisation of quattrocento perspective and its illusion of movement meant, for Bazin, that 'we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced, actually *re-presented*, set before us, that is to say in time and space' (p. 14). For this reason, argued Bazin, cinema, like photography, was intrinsically objective.

Bazin was arguing not only that the image resembles its referent, but that it does so because of the nature of its production; that is, there is an existential or causal relationship between the two; 'the photograph as such and the object in itself share a common being, after the fashion of a fingerprint' (p. 15). These two relations appear in the American philosopher C.S. Pierce's classification of the sign as iconic, a physical quality or configuration of qualities that the image shares with its object, and indexical, a character which it could not have if its object did not exist. In cinema, not only does the image look like the original object, but it must have been there for the image itself to have been produced; the image is a guarantee of its own authenticity. This position becomes the object of critique of post '68 theorists (cf. Wollen, 1972, p. 126).

Lapsley and Westlake (1992) argue that it was with the formation of the Estates General of Cinema in Paris during 1968 that questions about cinema moved from the aesthetic to the ideological, and that two questions dominated:

firstly, how does mainstream cinema contribute to maintaining the existing social structure (i.e., what is its characteristic ideological operation and what are its mechanisms)? And secondly, what is the appropriate form for an oppositional cinema



that will break the ideological hold of the mainstream and transform film from commodity to instrument of social change? (p. 2)

These two questions dominated film theory for some time to come; with debilitating consequences for documentary. In brief, the answer to the first question was realism, and the answer to the second was reflexivity. Two of the post-68 theorists, Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni (1977), argued that 'what the camera registers in fact is the vague, unformulated, untheorized, unthought world of the dominant ideology [...] reproducing things not as they really are, but as they appear when refracted through the ideology' (p. 5). The fictional world of classical cinema was characterised by 'internal coherence, plausible and linear causality, psychological realism, and the appearance of spatial and temporal continuity' (Stam, Burgoyne, & Flitterman-Lewis, p. 188). For post-'68 film theorists, the only way round the cinema's dominant realist aesthetics was through a form of counter-cinema that rejected these aesthetics and drew instead on the theories and strategies of Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre. The key principle in Brecht's work that theorists seized on was 'reflexivity':

the principle that art should reveal the principles of its own construction, to avoid the 'swindle' of suggesting that fictive events were not 'worked at' but simply 'happened.' Brechtian theatre, in this spirit, revealed not only the sources of the lighting and the scaffolding of the sets, but also the narrative and aesthetic principles subtending the text. (Stam, Burgoyne, & Flitterman-Lewis, p. 200)

The radical avant-garde cinema that embodied these strategies included the work of Jean-Luc Godard and Yvonne Rainer. The debate about reflexivity and its political effectivity became a crucial part of the critique of realism. As E. Ann Kaplan (1982/3) notes, 'ever since the publication in 1973 of Claire Johnson's essay, 'Women's Cinema as Counter-Cinema,' filmmakers and critics have been involved in an often heated debate about the most effective strategies to be used *within* film texts' (p. 44). The following section examines documentary's reception within this debate.

## Mediation

Documentary's explicit claim that it said something meaningful about the social world meant that it came under particularly scathing attack. In a key essay written in 1969, Jean-Louis Comolli argued that:



The basic deception of direct cinema is really its claim to transcribe the truth of life, to be in the position of witness in relation to that truth so that the film simply records objects and events mechanically. In reality the very act of filming is of course already a productive intervention which modifies and transforms the material recorded. From the moment the camera intervenes a form of manipulation begins. (qtd. in Williams (ed.), 1980, p. 226)

The tone of this passage, with the controlling trope of 'deception' and 'manipulation', dominates much of the discussion of realism throughout film studies in the 70s and early 80s. Rather than producing an ontological bond between representation and real, the mechanics of cinema, for the film semioticians, created both the 'impression of reality', and an illusory access to the real itself. Hence the attraction for film theorists of the work of Saussure, whose focus was on the third class of Pierce's sign, the symbolic, and its arbitrary link between image and referent, on the habitual connections and conventions that he argued form the basis for linguistic communication.

To understand precisely how questions of realism have marginalised the documentary, we need to turn to what little theoretical attention the documentary received. A useful preliminary model is offered by Michael Renov (1986), drawing on Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of the notion of 'immediacy' and the work of Metz on 'the spectating instance'. The key term in Renov's model is 'mediation', 'those acts of intercession, reconciliation or interpretation intrinsic to all social phenomena' (p. 72): 'Four distinct sites or signifying instances are distinguishable which, in their interaction, create the meaning effect of the documentary film: the historical 'real,' the pro-filmic, the text and the spectator' (p. 72). In the text's passage between these four sites, from the 'real' to the spectator, there are three acts of mediation. The first of these acts of mediation, between the historical real and the pro-filmic, raises for Renov the issue of 'the relation between the behaviour of the subject as it is revealed before the camera and the actions of that same subject *if the camera were not present*' (p. 72, emphasis in original); at stake is the question of the difference the presence of the camera crew makes to the behaviour or performance of the subjects of the documentary.

The second act of mediation, between the pro-filmic and the text, involves all those acts of production engaged in by the production team such as framing, editing, lighting, use of

narration and music. The actual amount of mediation between these two sites varies considerably according to the type of documentary being made. At one extreme of this polarity is Andy Warhol's *Empire* (1964), an eight hour record of the Empire State Building shot entirely from the 44th floor of the Time-Life building on the 25th of June, the film is silent, contains no camera movement, and was edited only to allow for spool changes. (Koch, 1985, p. 145). At the other extreme is a documentary such as *In Bed with Madonna* (1989), a film that oscillates between stage performance and staged performance, switching between the colour, multiple-camera, synched-sound, public scenes of Madonna's concert show, and the black-and-white, single-camera, private scenes of her backstage life on tour.

The final act of mediation, between the text and the spectator, remains, Renov argues, untouched by film theorists. This neglect can be understood in relation to the fact that film studies has only recently begun to treat the film audience as actively involved in the production of meaning and pleasure (cf. Stacey, 1994). Renov's outline of the acts of mediation involved in documentary production and consumption are I think both useful and uncontentious, although it is important to point out, as his article implicitly acknowledges, that these acts are not exclusive to documentary and apply to any other non-fiction media; Andy Warhol's silk screen prints of Marilyn Monroe and Madonna's own book *Sex* also involve the passage from historical real to audience or reader consumption, and there are few disciplines in the Social Sciences that have not subjected themselves to a self-reflexive inquiry into their own acts of meaning production. Nevertheless, despite these acts of mediation, Renov argues that it is documentary that 'is the cinematic idiom that most actively promotes the illusion of immediacy insofar as it forswears "realism" in favour of a direct, ontological claim to the "real"' (p. 71), and it is this 'claim' that film theorists have concentrated on in their treatment of the documentary.

Indeed, writing on documentary tends to foreground analysis of any one of the areas of mediation that Renov outlines, ellipsing analysis of the others. For instance, writing on ethnographic film focuses on the intervention of the film crew on the behaviour of the subject, a semiotic approach foregrounds the signifying practices of the text, while feminist



writing on political documentaries has highlighted work on the material conditions of reception and the spectator's act of mediation. The trajectory of this criticism is usefully summarised by Philip Rosen (1993):

Film historians and film theorists have sometimes written as if the main pretence of documentary cinema has been the rather naive one [of] providing unmediated access to an ongoing profilmic event, as if the main line of the documentary cinema tradition consists in a constant attempt to convince the spectator s/he is watching the unfolding of the real, as if actuality could be reproduced through cinema. (p. 87)

A concern with this ontological trickery preoccupied the pages of *Screen*, another key institutional site for film studies, at the end of the 1970s. Firstly, Bill Nichols (1976/7) argued that 'the uncritical adoption and regular deployment of realist techniques only serves to further this slippage between sign and referent, textual system and real conditions, our relation to the expository diegesis and our relation to the real conditions of existence' (p. 47). Similarly, Annette Kuhn (1978) argued that 'it appears that the truth or authenticity of a representation turns precisely on an exclusion from that representation - or denial within it - of the means of its own material and semiotic production' (p. 75). Steve Neale (1979) suggested that documentary operated a 'set of essentially empiricist codes of exposition required to promote its knowledge effect' (p. 85), an effect reliant on the 'evidence' of the visible and the power of observation. And, while realism is not the focus of his attack, Noel King (1981) also argues that 'any strategy which locates evidence/history unproblematically in the human, the natural, means that history is held to reside in the subjectivities of its participants, in their individual perception of events' (p. 14). King notes that this humanist-historicist mode is similar to the strategies of bourgeois theatre described by Brecht, and drawing on Brecht he calls for new practices of filmmaking and criticism.

### **Against Anti-realism**

As I suggested above, a number of theorists argued that the only escape route for documentary from its complicity with the realist aesthetic was in fact through the kind of artistic reflexivity adopted and advocated by counter-cinema, its practitioners and followers. However, theorist and filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha (1993), though critical of

the realist documentary's apparent ignorance of its aesthetics and politics, is equally sensitive to the possibility that self-reflexivity's 'widespread appropriation as a progressive formalist device in cinema' has worked to 'reduce its function to a harmlessly decorative one' (p. 101); in the 1990s, reflexivity is simply another style to be cannibalised by postmodern culture. Equally, she argues, reflexivity can in anthropological documentaries become a disciplinary strategy that serves to validate the 'truth' of the statements made in the text. What distances Minh-ha's argument from earlier theorists of reflexivity then, is not only her awareness of the limitations of reflexivity itself, but also her desire to retain a notion of reality in her argument; realism is not simply opposed to reflexivity, and reality has an filmic and sPECTORIAL effectivity which cannot simply be theorised away.

In an article on feminist documentary, E. Ann Kaplan (1982/3) addresses some of the issues raised by the previous writers, particularly King's attack on women's realist documentary. She argues that this attack 'was part of an attack on realism in general and that it involved a related attack on 'essentialism,' or the assumption that there existed a specific female power in the body of individual women' (p. 45). In a discussion of two early 'women's documentaries' she looks at the validity and the problems of this theoretical approach.

Kaplan traces the source of this approach to five bodies of knowledge; semiotics, Lacanian psychology, the application of semiotics by Christian Metz and Roland Barthes to cinema and culture, the reading of history 'exemplified by the work of Foucault' (p. 49), and the work on the relation between ideology and text initiated by Althusser. Kaplan characterises the impact of these theories as an epistemological shift:

The whole theoretical base moved away from concern with social institutions themselves to preoccupation with the signifying practices through which we derive our knowledge of 'reality', including that of the social structures we inhabit.

The stress on signifying practices followed logically from the theory that, given their hegemonic shaping function, these practices are all we can ever 'know'. (p. 50)

The realist aesthetic, 'designed to perpetuate [the] illusion of a stable world' (p. 51), flies in the face of this theoretical approach. But, Kaplan argues, while some of the criticisms from semiotic theorists are valid, they are inadequate on three grounds: they fail to explain



the differences in different films' ideologies; they conceive the cinematic apparatus in such a way that the difference between fiction and documentary is elided; and they conceive the position of the spectator 'as "fixed", by the codes of the signifying practices' (p. 52). But, she argues, the anti-realist critique fails to distinguish the fact that it is not the realist cinematic mode itself that causes the problems:

[Clare] Johnston's and King's attack on realism is confused by their assumption that the realist cinematic mode in *itself* raises problems about the relation to representation to lived experience. The problems reside rather in either the filmmaker's or the audience's assumptions about this relation. But taken simply as a cinematic style that can be used in different genres (i.e. documentary or fictional), realism does not insist on any special relation to the social formation (p. 56).

Kaplan's argument that it is not the *technology* of realism itself that is the problem, but the assumptions we make about its effectivity, is productive and is taken up below. Kaplan shares with Kuhn a conviction that the problem with documentary film theory has been the type of questions that have been asked, and the theoretical models that are consequently applied. Drawing on Terry Eagleton's (1986) criticism that semiotics tends to dematerialise the referent (p. 109), Kaplan argues this is both the strength and the limitation of semiotics in that in revealing the nature of the language of documentary it was necessary to repress or forget what it talked about; the referent or real object which the sign denoted. The result has been criticism that is either hair-raisingly ahistorical, or preoccupied with questions of realism. Kaplan argues that 'we need a theory that takes account of the level now usually referred to scornfully as "naively materialistic"' (Kaplan, p. 55).<sup>1</sup>

A similar critique of feminist film theorists' approach to feminist documentary film was recently mounted by Alexandra Juhasz (1994). She notes the personal and professional frustration she feels as a feminist academic and filmmaker who has 'been instructed to believe that *realism* and *identification* - which are claimed to be axiomatic of talking heads,

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<sup>1</sup>While much of Kaplan's argument is convincing, her attack on King (1981) is misplaced, in that his article never actually mentions realism; historicism and humanism are his concerns. Further, the majority of the article *does* in fact talk about the subject of the documentaries. Secondly, there is a theoretical problem with the way in which she groups Foucault's work in with semiotics, structuralism and psychoanalysis, not only in terms of theoretical delineation, but also because the general criticism she makes of this terrain does not apply to his work (cf. Foucault, 1988, p. 18).



cinema vérité, or realist documentary - are not sophisticated, or even legitimate, formal strategies. And then correspondingly, feminist documentary films and videos which use such strategies [...] are *bad*, or at least naive, feminist projects' (p. 172). She argues that the term realism, or as it is usually referred to in such critiques 'naive realism', has been used in a largely over generalised way, and that a crucial consequence of this approach has been that feminist theorists' critiques of feminist filmmakers' documentaries 'did not adequately describe the documentary films that they critiqued' (p. 174). Juhasz argues that the very logic of this critique is problematic:

To portray the world with a realist film style does not necessarily imply that one believes that the reality portrayed is fixed, stable, complete or unbiased, although it probably means that one has an opinion about what this reality means, feels like, how it functions, or how it can change. To see a representation of something in the real world is not necessarily to confuse that image with reality. (p. 175)

Juhasz is rightly particularly suspicious of the position or distance the critique of realist documentary inscribes between the feminist academics themselves (the informed), and the producers of the documentary, the people taking part in it, and the audience (the naive), and the depiction of that audience as passive in their spectatorship unless confronted by interventionist or avant-garde formal techniques. She argues that the position adopted by these theorists must be understood in terms of the larger non-theoretical context in which it occurred, in particular 'the need to legitimise and authorise the highly suspect work of feminist interpretation and the deeply troubling fact of feminist scholars in the academy' (p. 176). This need was similar to Film Studies attempt to carve itself a legitimate niche amongst the traditional disciplines in the academy at the same time.

But perhaps the most comprehensive attack on the logic of the critique of documentary is that of Noel Carroll (1983), who argues that 'the non-fiction film remains one of the most confused areas of film theory' (p. 5). Carroll's argument is worth pursuing at length precisely because it is so radically at odds with the majority of British film theory. Central to his argument is his claim that the use of key concepts in the documentary debate, particularly 'objectivity' and 'fiction', is ambiguous and misconceived.

Firstly, Carroll argues that the one thesis that could potentially argue that any film,

including nonfiction, is necessarily subjective is that which rests on the following syllogism: all films are composed of individually framed shots, framing involves the imposition of a point-of-view, therefore all films are personal or 'subjective'. However, he points out that the term 'point-of-view' refers to four discrete concepts in film theory. The above syllogism rests on the deliberate elision of the gaps between them, particularly on the conflation of the notion of personal point of view, the values and feelings of a subject, with that of camera view point in individual shots, thus 'suppressing the fact that the two phenomena, though bearing the same name, are distinct' (p. 11). Further, Carroll argues that the argument that personal point of view determines camera point-of-view is clearly untenable given the number of shots that occur in any one film and the rapidity of thinking and movement this would often entail in shooting. Even were the personal point of view equals camera point of view thesis to hold for individual shots, he argues that it would be a fallacy to argue that it therefore applied to an entire film, in that editing has the potential to radically alter any 'intentions' the camera person may have had. Moreover, Carroll argues that to equate the flow of imagery to how the filmmaker saw the event is a mistake in that it equates 'the camera to non veridical, involuntary perception' (p. 13). The final problem with the point of view argument, a frequent bone of contention in auteur theory, is exactly whose point-of view is it?

Theorists also argue that nonfiction films cannot be objective because they involve processes of selection and arrangement and interpretation. However, these processes are not exclusive to film but occur in most if not all other areas of nonfiction. To argue that nonfiction films are subjective because they involve these processes would be to demolish the subjective/objective distinction in general. Carroll argues that to say that any piece of research or communication is subjective in the sense that it is man-made [sic] is to use the term redundantly in that it is stating the obvious. Instead, he proposes that selection, arrangement and interpretation be seen as general nonfiction practices that are open to evaluation on the basis of inter subjectively available facts and modes of reasoning; although selection and interpretation may render a text objectively weak, they do not necessarily render it subjective.



More generally, nonfiction films are labelled subjective because they are not objective, but how is objectivity being used here? Carroll argues that there are three notions in play: 'First, 'objective' means 'true'; second, 'objective' means 'representative of all - or at least all the major - viewpoints on the subject at hand'; and third, 'objective' means 'having no viewpoint - personal, political, theoretical, etc. - whatsoever' (p. 14). The second and third concepts are clearly incompatible. Furthermore, a text that fulfilled the second criteria would amount 'to cacophony and contradiction', while the third, the idea that it is possible to 'conceive of a subject totally unstructured by any conceptual framework', is ridiculous (p. 15). As for the first concept, the requirement that objectivity be equivalent to truth is far too strong; you can base your theory on empirically derived statistics, that it is subsequently proved wrong does not mean it was overly subjective.

In any domain of knowledge there are established research methods, criteria for assessing data, and modes of argumentation and presentation that are held to be the best means for getting at the truth. Although these methods will shift across time, they are held up by practitioners as common practice. In light of this Carroll argues that if a piece of research adheres to the practices of reasoning and evidence gathering relevant to its field it may be called objective in that 'it can be inter subjectively evaluated against standards [...] shared by practitioners of a specific arena of discourse' (p. 16). This, Carroll argues, is as true for the nonfiction film as it is for any other nonfiction practice in that it too produces information from identifiable domains of knowledge. We shall return to these domains later.

Moreover, theories attempting to show that nonfictional films are in fact fictional, Carroll argues, rely on an undifferentiated concept of 'fiction': 'A very liberal set of features, including manipulation, choice, structure, coding, the influence of ideology, is implicitly assumed or explicitly employed to define 'fiction' in such a way that it is difficult to imagine anything that is not fiction' (p. 22). That all films are mediated is undeniable, indeed, to some degree all texts are mediated, so there is little point in defining the act of mediation as belonging exclusively to the realm of fiction. Carroll points out that films indexed as nonfiction are ontologically distinct from fiction in that they refer to the actual

world. We should in theory be able to evaluate the knowledge claims those films make, because there should be evidence for them. All films are also constructions. One of the arguments against the nonfiction film is that in not acknowledging their constructed nature they are masking it, and thereby deceptive or false. But, argues Carroll, surely the obviousness of the fact that they are constructions, rather than the real thing, relieves the films of having to acknowledge the fact within the film itself. Indeed, is that not what title credits do in great detail anyway?

John Corner (1992) has also argued that there are fundamental theoretical problems with particular aspects of the realist critique. He argues that: 'debate about realism has often wanted to link an 'illusory' level of depictive form to a broader claim about the effectivity and deceptiveness of the 'knowledge' underlying, informing and conveyed by the depiction' (p. 98), such that a passage is assumed between what Corner calls 'Realism 1 - the project of verisimilitude (of being *like* the real) and Realism 2 - the project of reference (of being *about* the real)' (p. 98). Corner argues that part of the problem has been the way in which the term has been applied across a variety of other medium, such as theatre and literature, and their respective disciplines. Christopher Williams (1994) argues that a key aspect of this slippage has been the 'amalgam of two distinct concepts: the Classical Realist Text of Colin MacCabe and the Classical Hollywood Cinema of David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson and Janet Staiger' (p. 277).

We might argue that film studies borrowed from these other theoretical areas partly because it was itself so recent a discipline, and needed to establish itself in the academy in relation to an existing body of theoretical work. As we saw at the start of this chapter, it was 'within the context of literature and the humanities rather than sociology and the social sciences' (Nichols, 1981, p. x) that film studies developed. Similarly, Williams suggests that academic and institutional (rather than theoretical) decisions and strategies lay behind realism's dominance in the field of television theory. However, as we have seen, the direction this development took had serious consequences for the documentary as an object of study. For instance, Juhasz argues that the politics of representation of seventies theory meant an emphasis on avant-garde feminist filmmaking and a corresponding negation of



political documentaries that employed conventional realist aesthetics. Consequently, she argues, film studies carries 'the legacy of a large and important body of feminist film work which has been inadequately and insufficiently theorised, and the simultaneous canonisation and institutionalisation of only one side of the feminist-realist debates' (p. 173). I have suggested that Juhasz's argument can be extended to documentaries in general.

That film studies has such a brief history is of course a consequence of the fact that film itself is so recent a medium. Further, just like its academic counterpart, it has, as Carroll argues, 'developed primarily by imitating and incorporating previous cultural practices and concerns' (p. 33). It is the substance and nature of documentary's incorporation within such practices and concerns that this thesis is centrally concerned. The second part of the chapter turns to literature on the documentary that offers a way out of the reproductive fallacy impasse that has frozen analysis of the genre, literature that begins to suggest a relation between the production of knowledge in the documentary and in other non-fiction practices.

## **PART TWO: BEYOND THE PROBLEM OF REALISM**

### **Documentary and Semiotics**

Bill Nichols (1976/7) was one of the first to provide a theoretical model and meta-language for analysing documentary film. He suggests that 'documentary may profitably be so examined as a genre with conventions and audience expectations like those of other genres, and that documentary does not form a simple opposition to the term narrative' (p. 36). Documentary, he argues, is a 'semiotic system' with its own 'specific signifying procedures [that] are not dependent on documentary's occasional utilisation of narrative techniques' (p. 36).

Focusing on the direct-address documentary, Nichols distinguishes between the diegesis in documentary and that in narrative film, by arguing that the former 'is no longer a spatio-temporal universe plausibly maintained in its autonomy, but rather a conceptual universe,

the domain of the exposition' (p. 38). Whereas fiction film employs a spatio-temporal continuum across the entire length of the film's narrative, the use of such a spatio-temporal continuum in documentary is intermittent. On the question of part/whole relations within the textual system, Nichols adopts the basic principles of Metz's 'grande syntagmatique', agreeing with Metz that 'the distinctive element in such a code is not the sequence itself [...] but only the logical principle of ordering which animates it and assures it cohesion' (qtd. in Nichols, p. 40). Given his argument that the diegesis has shifted to the domain of exposition, then the individual sequence within the whole should be understood as a block of argumentation.

Nichols suggests that one of the key features of the direct address documentary is its use of a narrator. The narrator, Nichols argues, 'often serves to bridge sequences: to make manifest the logical principle that orders the sequence into larger units, segments, and a textual whole'; Nichols calls the narrator's role in this instance the 'coherence function' (p. 41), arguing that 'it usually promotes the verbal sound track to a position of dominance, organising the remaining tracks and providing the viewer's point of entry to the expository whole' (p. 42). He goes on to suggest that the denotative logic of the narration may in fact sometimes be itself subordinate to a connotative logic that is not signified at the literal level.

Occasionally, Nichols notes, a documentary's exposition may be primarily or even exclusively organised by characters. In most cases characters function within sequences as witnesses or authorities, usually through the medium of an interview. Occasionally they may serve a bridging function, either explicitly, through foreknowledge of the film's overall structure, or implicitly, as a function of the editing process (p. 44). It is arguable that today, almost twenty years after Nichols wrote this piece, documentaries are in fact primarily organised around individuals, who rather than simply serving to illustrate a general point, are themselves the focus and source of cohesion of the documentary itself. This is of course particularly true of the 'video diaries' which have become such a key feature of television documentary production in the nineties. Nichols sub-divides sound/image relationships involving characters into four categories. The most common,



sync sound image shots or sequences, 'anchor characters within their milieu and [...] realise (make real) the surface manifestations of their extra-textual identity' (p. 45). The other three relations involve non-sync sound/image combinations, either illustration of a speaker's point, contradicting it, or extending it through the use of a visual metaphor.

Finally Nichols considers the expository system as a whole and the viewer's place within it. Exposition, he argues, 'usually appears as a tacit proposal: the invocation of and promise to gratify a desire to know' (p. 47). Direct address, explicitly invoking the viewer as the subject of the documentary's address, sets up two positions: the centre for its own discourse, the locus of the Narrator-Who-Knows, which reciprocally calls the viewer into a comparable centre or locus, distinguished by the lack of knowledge which is promised them. Nichols sees this positioning of the subject as similar to the place of the subject in the classical narrative system, although with documentary, the subject expects the desire to know to be fulfilled in terms of real conditions of existence, rather than according to the imaginary world of the fictional film.

Annette Kuhn (1978) continues the work begun by Nichols, defining a nonfiction film as 'one which declares that a pro-filmic event has not been constructed or arranged for the purpose of producing a film' (p. 73), while admitting that this definition is open to question. She too notes the lack of critical attention to the documentary 'which considers it as a specific body of films either in terms of the 'formal' characteristics of film texts or with regard to the modes of address and subject positions constructed by them' (p. 72), and to the lack of consideration of the institutional conditions of production.

Like Nichols, Kuhn argues that introducing the spectator into the discourse on documentary film 'permits a move towards a metalanguage which can engage with spectator-text relationships and the ways in which documentaries inscribe an audience in their mode of address' (p. 78). Kuhn focuses on documentaries that employ an indirect mode of address, where address comes entirely from the film's image track. For Kuhn, the crucial difference between the observational film and the expository genre is the way in which the spectator is placed in relation to the text. Whereas in the expository genre the

viewer is positioned as a subject characterised by a lack of knowledge, in the observational film the viewer occupies a privileged position where the rift between having knowledge and lacking knowledge is collapsed. The spectator occupies the same position as that of the camera and the camera operator, and the risk of polysemy, identified by Nichols, is avoided by defining and confining the space in which the viewer/observer is clearly held.

Kuhn subdivides the observation genre into three types according to how they treat the question of authorship, and the implications of this for their mode of address. Kuhn argues that ethnographic film, in common with much academic discourse, operates an apparently authorless discourse where 'the camera operator is constituted as an absence and the camera eye itself becomes the privileged place of the spectator' (p. 79). The lack of an author is taken to constitute the absence of subjectivity, that is objectivity, thus guaranteeing the neutrality or truth of the knowledge produced. This is in complete contrast to cinema vérité, which rather than denying subjectivity, foregrounds it, such that 'the eye of the camera is a displacement of the eye of the camera operator' (p. 79); here truth is guaranteed by the status the film maker holds as either an author or as the representative of an institution. Similarly, Kuhn argues, the 'ethnoscience film', which embraces the ethnoscience approach of anthropology and the ethnomethodology of sociology in its study of everyday life, shifts its mode of address 'away from camera eye or camera operator as point of origin onto the institutional framework constituted as anthropology' (p. 81).

While the semiotic approaches of Nichols and Kuhn remain rather abstract, they are useful in that they begin to address documentary not as an ontologically suspect genre, but as genre that guarantees the veracity of the knowledge it produces through particular discursive operations. They argue that central to the documentary are the acts of exposition and observation, and that the documentary may draw on devices that are also found in other non-fiction texts, such as the interview, and equally may draw on those found in fictional texts, such as narrative. While it may be that the strict opposition they construct between the expository and the observational documentary breaks down when applied to the Films of Scotland documentaries, as an individual text usually moves between the two, in creating a vocabulary specific to the documentary genre, the two theorists have helped to



break the marginalisation of documentary within film theory discourse.

Nevertheless, the documentary's truth claim remains a central concern of their articles, and this concern is never far from theoretical discourse on the documentary and continues into the 1980s and work on the television documentary. Indeed, it is possible to suggest that part of the reason for the neglect of documentary within film theory is that while the cinema might have been a significant site for the documentary in the first half of the century, since the 1950s the prime site for the documentary has increasingly been television. In an article on science documentaries, Roger Silverstone (1983) offers an account of what he calls the function of the mythic in television documentary. Drawing on Claude Levi-Strauss's theory of the cultural function of myth, whereby narrative is used to resolve social contradictions and conflicts, Silverstone argues that television documentary performs the function of transforming an unfamiliar, threatening reality into one that is familiar and reassuring. Through its use of the forms and conventions of narrative and genre; 'the majority of television science, in labelling and execution, is preoccupied with the science of the potent margins - on the one hand the cosmic and on the other the working of the human body' (p. 139). Referring to the work of Vladimir Propp, he argues that the heroic narrative of mythic documentary, like that of the wundertale, is a pattern of quests, tests, and heroes, whose narrative time is 'pregnant with meaning, motivated, whose currency is fate, destiny, apotheosis and origin' (p. 144).

### **Anthropology, Historiography, and the Social in Documentary**

In this section I want to suggest that one of the key problems facing critical treatment of the documentary has been the kinds of film histories that have been constructed. In these histories, with the exception of particular moments such as the British documentary movement, documentary film has struggled to find a place. Raymond Williams (1983) argues that until recently there have generally been two kinds of film histories:

In the simplest versions, film and cinema are treated as unitary subjects, which are then made to disclose their historical stages of development [...]. In what appear more complex versions, tendencies or schools or (very commonly) national 'traditions' are identified within the more general phases. (p. 9)



The key problem underlying both sets of histories is, argues Williams, 'the assumption that there is a significant unitary subject, film, with reasonably evident common properties' (p. 9). The only definite unifying element, he argues, are the processes of material production, but even these, with the acceleration of video and computer technology, no longer had the unity they might have had when Williams was writing in the early eighties. The more general point that Williams is making, similar to that made by Annette Kuhn at the start of this review, is the problem with the kind of lines that have been drawn around the subjects under discussion, in this case the lines that academic discussion of film has drawn around the subject of film itself.<sup>2</sup> Williams' central argument is that film arrived at the end of a century of developments in popular culture and took its place within that culture and in relation to cultural forms of previous centuries; 'there are really very few films, by proportion, for which there is not a nineteenth-century precedent in drama or entertainment' (p. 17). What I want to argue is that this is equally true for documentary film, which took its place in relation to earlier and contemporary forms of knowledge such as travel writing, historical writing, and ethnography. Documentary film, I want to argue, is a node within a wider network of discursive practices. Accordingly, this section considers a number of critical treatments of documentary that engage with cultural formations outside those of the documentaries themselves.

A central focus of Bill Nichol's (1991) more recent work has been the role of rhetoric in documentary:

Aristotelian rhetoric takes up the ways in which any argument can gain persuasive support. One avenue is through evidence: factual material recruited to the argument (witnesses, confessions, documents, objects: those material representations brought from the world for us to see and hear). Another is 'artistic proof,' those persuasive strategies deployed by the speaker or author on his or her own behalf. Evidence in documentary often depends on the indexical bond of the film image with what it represents. Artistic proofs, though, depend on the quality of the text's construction, the persuasiveness of its representations or truth claims. (p. 134)

Aristotle's metaphor of two avenues is however misleading, because factual material and artistic proof are not discrete strategies but are mapped onto one another; the object of

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<sup>2</sup>As we shall see in the next chapter, Williams' observations also apply to discussions of the representation of Scotland.



artistic proof is the factual material presented as evidence which artistic proof then arranges. Nichols goes on to argue that 'facts make sense only within systems of meaning' (p. 152), and that 'to those within the discursive community, accepted rhetorical ploys may seem both normal and neutral' (p. 137). This suggests that when we are talking about representation and truth claims, we are necessarily talking about discursive formations; in Foucault's account, discursive formations are where knowledge and truth are produced and fought over, truth claims are the product of historically specific systems of meaning. Nichols argues that 'documentary film has a kinship with those other nonfictional systems that together make up what we may call the discourses of sobriety - science, economics, religion, welfare' (p. 3). The rest of this section discusses work that has begun to examine that kinship.

*Desert Victory* was the first feature length documentary produced by British forces film units during World War II. Annette Kuhn (1981) argues that the film 'occupies the intersection of two sets of discourses relating on the one hand to documentary film and on the other to historical writing' (p. 48). Drawing on Metz's (1976) distinction between discourse and *histoire* (whereby '*histoire*' is an impersonal form of enunciation, while '*discours*' inscribes a person as the source or object of address), she argues that the voice-over of the type of 'classic' direct address documentary discussed by Nichols, rarely employs an explicit point-of-view; 'it bears the features of the distanced impersonal "*histoire*" (p. 50). But, she argues, *Desert Victory* is marked by an address which shifts at particular moments between '*discours*' and '*histoire*', and that these shifts are 'precisely the point at which the various historical contexts erupt within the text' (p. 50). At various points in the documentary, the characteristic impersonal mode is occasionally displaced by the spectator becoming 'written into the discourse of the voice-over as participant in, as well as witness of, events narrated in the film' (p. 51). Kuhn calls this use of '*discours*' 'a collective mode of address'. The collectivity addressed is given a coherent identity through the historical context of the film itself; World War II and the North African desert campaigns, 'particularly as appeals, frequently implicit, to the spectator's prior knowledge of the desert campaign and its outcome' (p. 52).

Elaborating on the concept of a collective mode of address, Kuhn argues that 'as well as being addressed as occupying a position of knowledge, the spectator is placed in a certain position in relation both to that knowledge and to other spectators. This relationship is characterised largely by an appeal to unity, most apparent in an address which renders the spectator as a member of a collectivity' (p. 56). The repeated use in the commentary of the first person plural rhetorically contains the spectators as members of a united community.<sup>3</sup> One effect of this address is to efface the source of the enunciation, producing a broad notion of unity and permitting the entry into the address of a variety of social groups. Placed in its historical context, Kuhn sees this as part of 'the populism informing documentary representations and discourses of the period' (p. 58), a point returned to below. Kuhn also argues, however, that 'the work of the enunciation is to constitute only the British as participants in the desert victory' (p. 61). She identifies a number of 'privileged moments', atypical shots or sequences, which are either set in Britain, or foreground fixed signifiers of 'Britishness': Churchill, the Union Jack, Big Ben. Each of these, she argues, appears in contexts suggesting victory or victoriousness such that, fixed signifiers of 'Britishness' simultaneously connote victoriousness. In a manner similar to Barthes (1972) discussion of the workings of myth, the fixity of these signifiers of Britishness is such that the victory at a specific historical moment that is the subject of the film becomes 'a mythic implication of eternal victoriousness' (p. 68).

Such strategies of narrative history are also the concern of Noel King (1981). In an article on the political documentaries *Union Maids* and *Harlan County USA* he maps out what he sees as the task of film analysis. He argues that even when faced with a film that deals with a political subject from a 'radical' authorial point of view, 'rather than reading *with* a film or reading *off* from it, reading might go *against* the film' (p. 9, emphasis in original). From this position King observes the way in which in recent documentaries 'a discourse of morals or ethics suppresses one of politics and the way a discourse of a subject's individual responsibility suppresses any notion of a discourse on the social and linguistic formation of

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<sup>3</sup>John Ellis (1981) argues that the use of the first person plural emerged during a specific historical moment.



subjects' (p. 11). The means of this suppression are the textual mechanisms employed by the films, specifically the use of 'sub-forms' of narrative: 'biography, autobiography and popular narrative history':

Autobiography draws on practices of reminiscence and anecdote, notions of personal experience, while popular narrative history constructs notions of national destiny. These two trajectories then merge, the one of individualist life-history, the other of collectivised national movements and in each case the movement is teleological: from a past to a present, from a point of origin or genesis along a casual chain until we reach the present. The present becomes the point from which we can know the past. The effect of employing such a familiar narrative system is that the origin always already contains the end. (p. 12)

King's reading of the two films aims to uncover the tropes used by this 'humanist-historicist' mode, and draws on the work on popular memory by Keith Tribe (1977/8) and Michel Foucault (1977) (discussed in later chapters). In particular, King highlights the importance of the use of the interview format, 'the rules which construct interviews and subjects in and for interviews' (p. 14), and 'the relation holding among the archival footage, the anecdotal reminiscences constructed in the interviews and the bridging voice-over narration' (p. 15).

In a review essay on the Museum of Modern Art's 'Anthropological Cinema' season, Mick Eaton and Ivan Ward (1976) have looked at the relationship between ethnography, documentary and the ethnoscientific film, again prefiguring a discursive approach to documentary. Eaton and Ward begin not with the ethnoscientific film itself, but with the formation of anthropology's objects and aims, arguing that 'the terms of its discourse arise from the space opened up for it within the ideological field of nineteenth-century England' (p. 114). This space was created by two historical shifts; the extension of zoology to include the human species, and the declining power of Judeo-Christian explanations of the human species position in natural history. Anthropology, they argue, transformed the concept of 'natural selection' into the principle of 'the survival of the fittest', while

maintaining the position of man at the top of the species hierarchy; the grand narrative of religion was simply replaced by the grand narrative of science.<sup>4</sup>

It is only after describing anthropology's discursive regime that Eaton and Ward turn to its use in documentary. They argue that the anthropologist's use of film as a note taking tool fails to examine what they call 'the reality of the illusion' (p. 116). But the illusion here is not the slippage between referent and real that so worried theorists of realism, rather it is the 'attempt to elide the gap noted above between anthropology and its object, the social' (p. 115). The elision practised by ethnoscientific film is a silence about the discursive formation that informs its practices; what remains undeclared in the documentary is the way in which the knowledge which is produced about anthropology's favourite object, primitive man, is shaped by the discursive regularities of anthropology itself; 'anthropology itself defines the positions of 'observer' and 'humanity' and is an essentially liberal practice, given the task of 'saving' the primitive and rescuing man as the foundation of the social' (p. 116). The task of the critic then, I am arguing, becomes one of uncovering the operation of discourse in documentary.

There are some discussions of the place of documentary in British broadcasting which are also consistent with this approach. For example, in an article on the historical formations of British Broadcasting, Paddy Scannell (1979) describes the emergence of what he terms the 'social eye' in television documentary. Scannell argues that broadcasters developed two programme types for handling what he calls 'actuality', social subjects that were deemed to be outside the immediate affairs of government; namely the dramatised documentary and the documentary report:

the 'social subject' in broadcasting deals with issues of general social concern (housing, unemployment, delinquency, old age, etc.), with the 'problems' of contemporary society. They characteristically take an issue, ask what is being done about it, and examine the extent to which it is or is not being satisfactorily dealt with. They tend to involve 'the people' (usually as social victims) and professionals in the social services (p. 97).

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<sup>4</sup>According to Eaton and Ward, the task set for the anthropologist is to uncover the history of the rationality of the human species, consequently, their privileged object of study becomes 'primitive man' (p. 115).



The dramatised documentary was a scripted, rehearsed and acted studio-based production with filmed continuity and location inserts. Scannell describes how in each programme, 'a generalised topic was gradually changed into an ideal-typical representation distilled into a narrative line' (p. 102), arguing that its stance varied between 'a sympathetic populism' and the 'cruder expose' of crime reporting. The documentary report developed by Norman Swallow on the other hand, while also taking as its subject current social issues, had, argues Scannell, a different method and approach, in that the majority of each programme was made up of a filmed report in a specific local area. As well as this strong regional focus, it drew explicitly on the general social attitude or 'way of seeing' of *Picture Post*, its 'genuinely populist and democratic impulse which crystallised the deeply felt movement towards social democracy of the war years' (p. 103).

As John Corner (1991) points out in a later piece, the other major influence on Swallow was the 1930s British documentaries, in particular Arthur Elton and Edgar Anstey's *Housing Problems* (1935). As Corner notes, one of the techniques that *Special Inquiry* inherited from *Housing Problems* 'was extensive use of direct-address to camera by interviewed participants' (p. 45). While Corner notes that these 'interviews' were in fact highly mediated through scripting and rehearsal, what is particularly significant about *Housing Problems* for my concerns is that, as Andrew Tolson (1990) argues 'it reproduces, almost in classical form, the conventional "sociological gaze", with its routine forms of subjectification that we have detected in the work of Henry Mayhew' [*London Labour and the London Poor*] and more generally that 'there are clear continuities between nineteenth and twentieth century approaches to social investigation' (p. 149). I will return to these continuities in more detail below, the point I want to make here is that the particular kind of historical approach adopted by Scannell, Corner and Tolson to the documentary offers a particularly productive treatment of the documentary form that foregrounds its debt to previous historical forms and the way in which the conventions of those forms shape the production of particular kinds of social knowledge.

This argument is supported by an article by Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (1985) which looks at *Housing Problems* and other British documentary films of that period and their

relation to a wider cultural history. As well as looking at the relation between Grierson's ideas about the role of film and the political vocabulary of the early twentieth century, centred around notions of citizenship and the educative state, they argue that 'the grammar and concerns of the movement can be traced back to the 'Into Unknown England' writing of the late nineteenth century' (p. 22). In this writing, a combination of personal exploration and sociological analysis, the reader travels into an unknown world, not the other culture of some distant land but, as Grierson put it, 'the jungles of Middlesborough and the Clyde' (qtd. in Colls & Dodd, p. 23), the recently discovered other culture of the British urban working class. The invocation of ethnography is deliberate, for just as Bill Nichols (1981) has argued 'ethnographic films attempt to explain/describe some aspect of another culture to members of the filmmakers own culture - within a context informed [...] by traditional anthropological concerns and concepts' (p. 238), so too the documentary films of the 1930s were, as Colls and Dodd argue, 'representations of the men of one class by the men of another' (p. 25) within a framework that was part sociological and part personal travel writing. Just as ethnography typifies the members of an other culture, so too this framework typified working class men as either victims or heroes, and was centrally concerned with the body at work.

It is tempting at this stage to suggest that documentary is itself a discursive practice: the production of knowledge is clearly one of the central concerns of the documentary, and as Michel Foucault (1972) has argued, 'knowledge is that of which one can speak in a discursive practice, and which is specified by that fact' (p. 182). Certainly it would be easy to class the documentary in all its various forms, along with high street security cameras, as part of a twentieth century version of the panoptic regime described by Foucault (1979a, pp. 195-228), where the unidirectional gaze of the camera/audience stands in for the hidden scientist or warden, as part of the dissemination and refinement of techniques of domination. Since the 18th century, argues Foucault, there has been a discursive explosion whereby all human behaviour has come under the imperialism of modern discourse and regimes of power/knowledge. In the documentary, a whole range of human experiences have become the object of intense analysis and scrutiny.



However, the problem with this account is its lack of attention to the distinction between medium and practice; it is one thing to argue of the documentary that it is caught up in the complex world of discourse, quite another to argue that the documentary itself might be described as a discursive formation. The objects, types of statement, concepts and thematic choices of the entire documentary corpus lack the regularity between them that is the necessary prerequisite of a discursive formation (Foucault, 1972, p. 38). Earlier I cited E. Anne Kaplan's argument that it is not the *technology* of realism itself that is the problem, but the way in which it is used, received and understood; the claims we make for it rather than the claims it makes itself. Another way of putting this would be to say that is not the technology of documentary film that is the problem, but the discourses which operate within it.

Nevertheless, as an exhibitionary technology the documentary is embedded in its own cultural history. The relationship between nonfiction media and a wider discursive context is explored by Brian Winston (1993). Winston argues that the ontological position that photography, and by extension, documentary hold is due to two factors: 'the long history of pictorial representation as a mode of scientific evidence, a history which conditions, in part, the research agenda that produces the modern camera; and second [...], the tendency of modern science to produce data via instruments of inscription whose operations are analogous to the camera' (p. 37). In the first half of the nineteenth century, Winston argues, the camera became classed as a scientific instrument, alongside the thermometer, the microscope and other technologies of observation and recording. Winston notes that amongst the earliest films were Muybridge's scientific studies of movement, while today we might note the use of video cameras in the social sciences to record the non-verbal behaviour of interviewees. The camera then is a technology positioned within scientific discourse, from this discourse it inherits a rhetoric of empiricism and objectivity coupled with Foucault's 'will to know', the discursive production of knowledge that is inseparable from questions of power. This is not of course the only discourse in which the camera serves as a technology. The photographic document, still or moving, has, as John Tagg (1988) illustrates, a related history in the discourse of criminality and policing, while it

occupies a very different role in the artistic domain. The relation between documentary and discourse is a central concern of this thesis and is pursued in more detail in subsequent chapters.

### **Documentary as Genre**

This does not of course mean that we should simply let the term 'documentary' disappear into the discourses in which it operates, for documentary film still operates as a meaningful category. What all theorists are agreed on is that we should treat 'documentary as a set of formal procedures, institutions and social practices producing work which is received in a manner qualitatively different from filmic fiction, a difference rooted in its presumed ontology' (Renov, 1986, p. 77). The substantial differences in the literature reviewed here lies in the precise nature of this presumed ontology and its theoretical consequences, a question that preoccupied the realism debate for a considerable time with regard to film in general. Nevertheless, what is clear is a critical and institutional awareness that in talking about documentary we are talking about a distinct kind of form.

Michael Selig (1989/90) has argued that critical commentary has played a crucial role in constituting 'documentary' as a distinct category (p. 99). The distinctiveness of documentary, he argues is asserted 'by establishing an opposition between documentary and narrative fiction films [and] by defining and redefining categories of representation within "documentary" cinema itself' (p. 99). Paradoxically, given the thrust of so much documentary criticism reviewed above, Selig argues that although writers distinguish documentary by the fact that it is engaged in filming 'actuality', they do not make the next step of adding objectivity as a criterion. Instead, writers assert the adequacy and appropriateness of documentary for its material, engaging a rhetoric of spatial metaphors in distinguishing it from narrative fiction:

This opposition between exterior and interior, or more specifically between surface and depth, informs the writing on documentary by not only authorising the 'visionary' power of the camera to reveal what's 'below' the surface appearance of things, but more importantly by authorising the function of editing to reveal what the camera can't 'see'. (p. 107)

William Guynn (1990) has similarly argued that while there are historical differences in



theories of documentary, what they hold in common is their demarcation between fiction and nonfiction, and further that this opposition is part 'of the convention that, since the emergence of modern historical consciousness, has posited an absolute distinction between the representation of "fact" and the representation of the "imaginable"' (p. 41). Guynn is rightly suspicious of this 'absolute' distinction, as much of this literature has argued, a poetics of documentary reveals a commonality of a number of narrative and troping strategies. However, I am arguing that to collapse the distinction between documentary and fiction film is both a theoretical and a pragmatic mistake. Documentary is distinguished as a distinct form of cinema institutionally in its place of production, critically and rhetorically in the wide range of writings on the subject, and finally, at its place of reception; we know we are watching a documentary not only because of its formal dynamics, which we recognise from watching other documentaries, but also because we are given extra-textual pointers to its status, on the billboard, by the announcer, in the newspaper previews and so on.

Perhaps then, it is useful at this stage to assert that, given the documentary's distinct features of production, institution, and consumption, it might usefully be referred to as a distinct genre. The literature reviewed frequently refers to the 'documentary genre', the 'expository genre', the 'ethnographic genre' and so on, suggesting an overarching genre with a number of sub-genres. A number of the writers also distinguish between non-fiction and documentary, with the latter a sub-set of the former, and again this is useful so long as we remain sensitive to the fact that non-fiction does not mean non-narrative. Attempting to define 'literature', Terry Eagleton (1986) offers the following argument:

As the philosophers might say 'literature' and 'weed' are *functional* rather than *ontological* terms: they tell us about what we do, not about the fixed being of things. They tell us about the role of a text or a thistle in a social context, its relations with and differences from its surroundings, the ways it behaves, the purposes it may be put to and the human practices clustered around it. 'Literature' is in this sense a purely formal, empty sort of definition. (p. 9)

Similarly, I want to argue that 'documentary' and 'genre' are functional concepts; they tell us less about the internal features of particular texts than about what we do with those texts. Firstly, generic forms were one of the earliest means used by the movie industry to

organise the production of films, the use of genre emerged from the emerging film industry's need to standardise and differentiate the work of different studios. Secondly, as Steve Neale (1990) has argued, genre is still a crucial ingredient in the marketing of a film; film posters, trailers and critics' reviews all contain generic characteristics that begin the process of audience anticipation. Following Neale, I would not therefore attempt to define the documentary genre according to a set of fixed textual features such as a particular iconography or the presence of a narrator; genres should be understood 'as systems of orientations, expectations and conventions that circulate between industry, text and subject' (p. 19). Various writers in this chapter have indicated some of the conventions of the documentary genre; in particular its attempt to produce knowledge about the real world through exposition and observation. These systems are not fixed but change across time as the history of the documentary demonstrates, neither is this system rigid, and unlike the documentary apologists such as Grierson, we should resist fixed rules of inclusion and exclusion.

This chapter opened with Annette Kuhn's observation that the criteria that have presided over discussions of the British documentary movement, particularly that of realism have excluded certain types of film from discussion. Drawing on this position I argued that those criteria have also excluded certain types of discussion, and that this has proved particularly disabling for documentary theory.<sup>5</sup> The chapter attacked the film studies approach on a number of fronts: firstly, it argued that within the discourse on film, it is difficult to say anything meaningful about documentary, beyond that because of the indexical nature of the documentary image, documentaries falsely claim a particular ontological relationship to the real. Secondly, it argued that the film studies approach to questions of realism and documentary is beset with theoretical inadequacies; the central concepts employed in the film studies approach are fraught with ambiguities and misconceptions. It argued that film theorists construct the 'representation dilemma', whereby a text is either a mirror copy of reality, or it is fictional. Since all texts are to

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<sup>5</sup>Renov (1993) has suggested that 'it may well be that the marginalization of the documentary film as a subject of serious enquiry is at an end' (p.1).



some extent mediated, this condemns all texts to the status of fiction. But the best thing to do with this dilemma is to reject it; the expectation that language might absolutely mirror the world was a theoretical error to begin with.

In addition, realist theory's assumption of a passive gullible audience with no knowledge of the cinematic apparatus is highly problematic, as is the exclusive opposition that is constructed between realism and reflexivity. Christopher Williams (1994) has suggested that film theory's work on realism in the 1970s shouldn't simply be ignored, but that we should analyse that theory directly and 'salvage from that period elements which may serve in the development of more pertinent theories or more sensitive criticism' (p. 275), and that has partly been my aim in reviewing that literature in this chapter. However, John Corner (1992) has argued of realism that the history of its debate has been such that 'the very notion itself is close to being devoid of all useful analytical meaning' (p. 97). This suggests that we must move away from essentialist and proscriptive grand theories such as realism, that remain silent in terms of cultural and historical context, and mobilise smaller theories that deal with particular aspects of a text and their connections to other cultural forms. We must look beyond the illusory unity of the isolated film and acknowledge the field of discourse to which it belongs; particularly in view of the fact that documentaries produce knowledge and that knowledge is always the product of discursive practice.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Representation of Scotland and the Scotch Myths Critique**

The previous chapter argued that the lack of critical attention to Films of Scotland documentaries, was partly a consequence of the way in which the documentary genre was marginalised within film theory discourse. However, it also noted that some documentaries, notably those of the British documentary movement, had escaped this exclusion. This suggests that there was an additional factor that contributed to the academic ellipsis of Films of Scotland. Although, as we shall see, Scottish film, and Scottish culture in general has been the subject of extended academic analysis, this analysis has virtually ignored this group of documentaries. Again, I want to argue that this was partly a consequence of the very nature of the critique of Scottish culture.

This chapter reviews the critique of the representation of Scotland that took place in the 1980s. It breaks down into three parts: the first part summarises the early 'Scotch Myths' critique, its attack on Tartanry, Kailyard, the urban myths of 'Scotland on the Move' and Clydesidism, and a recurrent narrative structure in Scottish feature films; the second part offers a series of critical reservations with this critique, its attribution of hegemony to the Tartanry/Kailyard couplet, its description of Kailyard and Romanticism, its position on the avant-garde, and its model of national identity; the third part examines the conditions of existence of the Scotch Myths critique, and introduces the methodological approach of the remaining chapters of the thesis.

#### **PART ONE: SCOTCH MYTHS**

##### **Tartanry, Kailyard, and National Nostalgia**

The terms that were to dominate discussion of representations of Scotland in popular culture received their first sustained treatment in Tom Nairn's (1981) *The Break Up of Britain*, a discussion of the rise of regionalism and the resurgence of nationalities in Britain and Europe in the twentieth century. Nairn outlines a materialist model of nationalism and examines its relatively late manifestation in Scotland. Scotland, he argues, was virtually



the only nation to move from a feudal state to a bourgeois nation-state *before* the nation-state became the political norm across Europe. However, the speed and historical circumstances of this shift had particular consequences; a significant development gap between Lowlands and Highlands, and the collapse of certain parts of the national 'superstructure'. Nairn argues that Scotland's material development was so rapid and advanced that there was no need for either a political nationalism or, despite the work of Sir Walter Scott, a 'mature' cultural romanticism.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the Scottish intelligentsia, deprived of the function fulfilled by their European counterparts, emigrated (pp. 111-124).

By the end of the nineteenth century the nation-state was the political norm, yet Scotland remained a stateless society. While the Union had economic benefits in terms of access to England's colonial and common market, and while the civil society of the Scots middle class grew economically more akin to England, Nairn argues that its loss of Statehood overshadowed and deformed the country's history, culture and identity. He argues that the popular-national consciousness that emerged during this period was rendered politically null by the generation of an 'obsessional' elegiac awareness of the country's past (pp. 135-157).<sup>2</sup> This took two forms. The first of these was Scotland's popular militarism and the tartan trappings of the Highland regiments; the imperialist patriotic, 'sentimentalised savagery' of Tartanry, itself evidence of the Highland/Lowland divide and the 'Anglophone appropriation of the debris of the destroyed Celtic culture' (pp. 167-8). The second form, dating from the 1820's, was Kailyard, an example of nineteenth century European kitsch: 'Kailyardism was the definition of Scotland as consisting wholly of small towns full of small-town 'characters' given to bucolic intrigue and wise sayings. [...] Offspring who leave for the big city frequently come to grief, and are glad to get home again' (p. 158). Nairn argues that Scots themselves are implicated in the popularity and longevity of this 'cultural sub-nationalism' and the accompanying silence about modern Scotland, but that

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<sup>1</sup>Nairn argues that Scott was not himself a Romantic writer, as his writing is an elegy for a lost nation; true romantic historicism draws a mythical continuity between past and present.

<sup>2</sup>Nairn's account of Scottish nationalism is not without its detractors (cf. McCrone, 1989).

this can only be understood in relation to the larger socio-political structure, Scotland's historical position as a stateless nation (pp. 159-165).

Nairn's characterisation of Scottish popular culture as dominated by Tartanry and Kailyard entered the public domain with the 'Scotch Myths' exhibition. Colin McArthur (1983a) provides a useful summation:

*Scotch Myths* began as an exhibition mounted by Barbara and Murray Grigor in 1981, originally at a small gallery in St Andrews and subsequently at the Edinburgh Festival where it was much praised by the English as well as the Scottish press. The exhibition, which ranged over postcards, whisky bottle labels, orange crate labels, the detritus of Scottish souvenir shops, popular music, tea cloths - indeed a wide trawl of Scottish popular culture - was mounted with considerable flair and wit (for instance, a pianola set in a Fingal's Cave grotto spouted water at the climactic moment of Mendelssohn's overture). But its highly serious intent was to expose the range of myths within which Scots have been and are being constructed. (p. 35)

The slides of Ossian, and the busts of Scott and Mendelssohn that were the background to the grotto are evidence of the exhibition's attempt to engage with the history of these myths and their gift store legacy; oatcakes, shortbread, and Scotch whisky are marketed through Jacobite themes and a fantasised past. Reviewing the exhibition, Lindsay Paterson (1981) concurred that the two strands of 'tartan mythology', Tartanry and Kailyard, continue to pass for Scottish national identity, divorcing Scots from their history and their social reality: 'Distorting, frothily romantic, escapist and trivialising, the Myths have concealed from us our history and our social reality. They have created a national identity [...] that cringes in the face of radical change, that takes refuge in a safely apolitical, philistine nationalism' (p. 68). Paterson, like Nairn, located the origin of Tartanry in 18th century European Romanticism and its appropriation of the symbols of Celtic culture. Kailyard borrowed from the work of Robert Burns, reducing his celebration of ordinary Scots to sentimental egalitarianism and moral rectitude. Even today, he argued, these mythologies form an ideological hegemony that pervades the Scottish consciousness, their 'debilitating nostalgia' offering an escape from the reality of life in twentieth century Scotland (pp. 68-71).

In an extended review of the exhibition and its early reviews, Colin McArthur (1981) elaborated on Paterson's analysis, arguing that the exhibition represented an ideological



intervention in Scottish politics. The strength of the exhibition, for McArthur, was that in bringing together such a large quantity of material and classifying it thematically, it demonstrated the systematic quality of a complex sign system which we usually only experience in a fragmented way, and placed this system in its historical context. Like Paterson, McArthur located the origins of Tartanry within European Romanticism. Analysing the development of Scottish landscapes he drew a direct line from European Romantics such as Caspar David Friedrich to McCulloch and Landseer, a line he continued on to the depiction of Scottish scenery in modern postcards. In Scottish Romanticism there is a further process of selection, particular subjects are privileged or foregrounded, so that through a process of condensation a single icon of Tartanry or Kailyard conjures up the ideology of the system as a whole (pp. 21-3).

McArthur went on to argue that if we are to understand the mechanics behind representations of Scotland, we need to alter our terms of reference. He suggested replacing the notion of stereotype with that of 'discourse', a move which would enable analysis of the *systematic* quality of Tartanry and Kailyard; images of Scots are not figures to be compared with their counterparts in the real world, but positions within a discourse (p. 24). Like Nairn and Paterson, McArthur argued that Tartanry and Kailyard, disseminated as images and categories of thought through all the media and practices of popular culture, became and remain hegemonic. Scots have been interpellated within this ideology, 'their consciousness being defined within the limits of the system' (p. 21).

In *Scotch Reels*, a collection of essays on the representation of Scotland in literature, film, and television published to coincide with the 'Scotch Reels' event at the 1982 Edinburgh Film Festival, a number of essays occupy the ground staked out by the Scotch Myths material. In the opening chapter, Cairns Craig (1982) argues that Tartanry and Kailyard occupied a hegemonic position in nineteenth century Scottish literature. For Craig, Kailyard literature, exemplified by J.M. Barrie's *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888) recalls 'a Scotland of parochial insularity, of poor, humble, puritanical folk living out dour lives lightened only by a dark and forbidding religious dogmatism' (p. 7). Cairns argues that the

mythological worlds of Tartanry and Kailyard are in fact united:

Tartanry and Kailyard, seemingly so opposite in their ethos, are the joint creations of an imagination which, in recoil from the apparently featureless integration of Scottish life into an industrial culture whose power and identity lies outside Scottish control, acknowledges its own inability to lay hold of contemporary reality by projecting itself upon images of a society equally impotent before the forces of history. (p. 13)

For Craig, like McArthur, the legacy of these myths is such that contemporary cultural producers lack a significant historical tradition to work with; Scotland's cultural past is no more than a set of historically irrelevant and politically disabling clichés.

In his summary of representations of Scots in the cinema in the same collection, McArthur (1982) comes to much the same conclusion, developing the ideas articulated in his *Scotch Myths* article to argue that the same limited number of discourses have informed the cinematic image of Scotland. Drawing on work by Malcolm Chapman (1978), McArthur argues that the 'generative cause' of Tartanry was Romanticism's act of 'symbolic appropriation' in the eighteenth century whereby rationalist, scientific Europe defined its own identity by fashioning the identity of the people on its peripheries in terms of a set of binary oppositions to the qualities it most celebrated in itself' (p. 41). With its geography and history, and the publication of the work of MacPherson and Scott, McArthur argues that Scotland became a key romantic domain. With its cinematic adaptations of Scott and Stevenson, and tales of Scottish history, Tartanry remains hegemonic on the big screen. Similarly, McArthur argues that early cinema simply adapted the popular sentimental literature of the Kailyard novels for the screen signifying 'Scottishness' through marked accents, dress, decor and music.

Craig (1981), in an article on recent Scottish film, argues that the American and English 'cultural imperialism' of Scottish culture and the Scottish consciousness is still in operation, and that Tartanry and Kailyard continue to operate a cinematic hegemony; 'Scottish films only reflect other aspects of Scottish culture in their inner exile from the realities of Scotland, in their displacement of Scots into the fantasy past of tartan noble savagery or Kailyard moral harmony' (p. 8). Like McArthur, Paterson, and Nairn, Craig identifies these myths with loss, defeat and nostalgia, both within the myths themselves and in the



culture that produced them:

The myths we have created of our homeland have not been atemporal myths that can be applied to any specific historical situation [...], but myths of the end of the very culture whose being they are supposed to express [...] Whether it is the defeated Jacobite highlander resurrected into tartan sentimentality, or the displaced peasant or artisan community rescued from the grave into harmonious Kailyard nostalgia, the defeat of whatever values they might represent is already inscribed in their structure. (p. 8)

While cautious about the effectivity and theoretical adequacy of the Scotch Myths critique, John Caughie (1990) argues that the 'privileged moment' of Tartanry is Culloden, 'a moment recast as an epic of tragic loss and triumphal defeat', while the privileged moment of Kailyard, he suggests, 'is probably the Great Disruption of the Church of Scotland in 1843' (p. 15). Other writers suggest that this sentimental nostalgia is not limited to the mythic structures of Tartanry and Kailyard. Ian Spring (1990), discussing Bill Bryden's *Ill Fares the Land* (1983), a film which portrays the events leading up to the evacuation of St Kilda, argues that the film not only engages an elegiac discourse, but also that the focus of the film is death itself (p. 168), while McArthur (1983a) suggests this elegiac discourse is generally prominent in versions of Scottish history (p. 34). In general for the Scotch Myths theorists, the problem with nostalgia and elegy is that they are 'politically disabling'.

### **Scotland on the Move, Clydesidism, and Local Heroes**

A potentially more 'appropriate' discourse McArthur identifies in some of the Films of Scotland documentaries is that which attempts to define the meaning of Scotland in relation to Clydeside, representing the Central Belt as a site of modern industrial activity. These documentaries are more appropriate because rather than turning to the pre-industrial rural past they engage with the industrial urban present. The problem with this 'Scotland on the Move' discourse, according to McArthur, is its formal means of representation and ideological framework: classic realist narrative and 'Griersonian documentary' celebrate the personal while mythicising the social and political, resulting in films that fail to accommodate analysis or contradiction.

However, McArthur's attack on the classic realist narrative and the Griersonian documentary offers an oversimplified account of these forms and their effect on filmic

content and meaning. As I argued in the previous chapter, the relation between realism and a particular ideological position is by no means direct, and the debate is too complicated to be treated as an already closed question in such a short space. Nevertheless, at the Scotch Reels event, the social-democratic (sic) discourse of Scotland on the Move found itself joined by another discourse, 'Clydesidism'; 'that discourse which affects both politics and art and which constitutes political activity as residing solely in the mass action of heavy industrial workers in the Clyde basin' (McArthur, 1983b, pp. 2-3). Furthermore, Cairns Craig (1981) argued that problematic features of Tartanry and Kailyard also structure these 'new' myths of post-industrial Glasgow, in that they too represent a nostalgic look back to a 'better' past (p. 9).

Discussion of these discourses runs three risks, the first two of which are a feature of the discourses themselves: firstly, affirmation of working class values can descend to naive populism or workerism;<sup>3</sup> secondly, there is a danger that when theorists use the term 'working class' this actually only refers to male working class and women are again written out of the picture. But finally, what goes strangely unnoted is the relationship between 'the stakhanovite political iconography and severely limited conception of politics' (McArthur, 1982, p. 44) of these discourses, and the work of the GPO film unit in the 1930s, particularly in documentaries such as *Coalface* and *Industrial Britain*. This is indicative of one of the key problems with this debate that I shall return to again, namely the way in which it sets itself up as an attempt to isolate *national* myths and describe a *national* culture. This analysis fails to look beyond the confines of the nation, it thus ascribes a distinctiveness to particular cultural formations in Scotland that ignores their existence both south of the border and abroad. Furthermore, in identifying a particular tendency in Scottish popular culture, analysis unifies its disparate elements, ethnography, nostalgia, industrialisation, workerism, too easily.

The problems with the discussion of the representation of Clydeside also inform discussion of the Ealing Studios comedies of the late 1940s and 1950s set in Scotland and their

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<sup>3</sup>For an extended discussion of workerism and the representation of Glasgow, see Spring, 1990.



contemporary manifestation in films such as *Local Hero*. McArthur's analysis of these films draws on the structuralist approach to film narrative that emerged in Film Studies in the 1970s, influenced particularly by the work of Claude Levi-Strauss and Vladimir Propp. According to McArthur, the comedy films set in Scotland engage the same narrative as the Ealing studio comedies whether they were actually produced at Ealing or not. In a Scottish context the play of humane rural values against capitalism and modernity translates as canny highlanders outwitting English authorities and American businessmen, an imaginative reversal, according to McArthur (1982), of the social reality (p. 47).

A later article on *The Maggie* looks at this 'discourse' in some detail. Again, McArthur (1983c) adopts Chapman's concept of symbolic appropriation to describe the way in which in defining themselves and their heritage non-Celts have used their own discursive structures to construct the Celts. In *The Maggie* this is displayed through a series of oppositions between Celt and non-Celt, or Scottish and American; dreaming and practicality, tradition and modernity, intuition and rationality, community and individuality, kindness and ruthlessness and so on. The film's narrative plays with these differences by setting an American businessman, Calvin B. Marshall, against the captain and crew of a puffer, the 'Maggie'. Marshall is firstly constructed in opposition to the crew, and humiliated as a consequence of that opposition, and then reconstructed within the values of the Celtic side of the opposition (pp. 10-14). The pivotal sequence in this process, foregrounded by its 'mise-en-scene', is the centenarian's birthday party. McArthur identifies four textual details used to create 'the Celtic World'; a bard speaking in Gaelic, the blind centenarian who only speaks Gaelic, a ceilidh, and Sheena, the girl who draws Marshall into the dance and thus signifies his final acceptance into the Celtic world. Drawing on work on the representation of women in Scotland, McArthur describes Sheena as 'in every sense the Spirit of Scotland as constructed within European Romanticism' (p. 14).

McArthur's discussion of the way the specificity of 'the Celtic World' is signified is interesting. If McArthur is correct in identifying the Gaelic language and the ceilidh as fixed cultural signifiers of the Celtic world, then this observation has significant

implications. Firstly, these two features function as recognisable links with the past in that they have been continually constructed, at least in the twentieth century, as 'traditional' forms of language and entertainment in Scotland. Eric Hobsbawm (1983a) argues that 'tradition', an articulation between the past and present, plays a particularly important role in the construction of a nation's identity, but that such traditions have often emerged and established themselves within recent history (p. 1). Philip Schlesinger (1991) argues that in terms of the question of national culture and national identity, what is of particular interest is Hobsbawm's argument that after the Industrial Revolution 'invented traditions' emerge from 'a sense of identification with a "community" and/or the institutions representing, expressing or symbolising it such as a nation' (Hobsbawm qtd. in Schlesinger, p. 169). In Schlesinger's terms then, this aspect of *The Maggie* can be seen as part of an imaginary and mediated relationship that is constructed between Scotland's present and its past, both in terms of its culture and by implication its collective identity.

However, whilst I agree with McArthur that in articulating the Celtic past and Scotland's present, *The Maggie* also articulates a sense of national identity, I would also argue that his account of the relationship between the film and a specifically Celtic world is at times problematic. McArthur argues that the centenarian's blindness 'dredges up Ossianic connections [sic] among age, blindness and wisdom' (p. 13), but the image of the blind seer goes back to Greek mythology and Tiresias. Similarly, the 'fey, winsome lass' belongs to a larger tradition of pastoral literature that embraces both Thomas Hardy and American Westerns. Similarly, if we were to take a more recent cinematic manifestation of Marshall, Peter Riegert's Mac in *Local Hero*, we might be struck by the similarity between Mac's predicament, and that of New Yorker Dr Joel Fleischman in *Northern Exposure*, the American serial set not in Scotland but Alaska; Fleischman, like Mac and Marshall, continually finds himself both frustrated and seduced by the remote way of life in rural Scicily.

Although this is not to deny that the particular figures identified by McArthur are common in representations of Scotland, the specificity of these signifiers relies on their juxtaposition with other signifiers of 'Scottishness' and the film's location being clearly marked as



Scotland. In other words, it is not particular images in isolation that signifies 'Scottishness', but their juxtaposition with each other and their existence in a filmic space that has already, in the pre-sold narrative image of the film (in reviews, posters, interviews and so on), been identified as a particular part of Scotland. The implication of these observations seems to be, I would argue, that in signifying the 'Celtic world' there are discourses at work that go beyond the confines of any one nation. The possibility of this reading is suggested by a remark of Iain Chambers (1990) about the non-Scottish versions of the Ealing comedies:

Viewing them today I am tempted to suggest that what they largely offered was a popular view of 'Britishness': the other side of the consensus, the subaltern world and values of the street community, the pub, the Coronation cup, fading sepia photographs on the parlour mantelpiece, the virtues of working and sticking together. It could be argued that this jocular and soft-edged version of lower-and working-class living represented a paternalistic and largely uncontested reproduction of the existing sense of Britain and its 'people'. (pp. 40-1)

In terms of the structural opposition between Celt and non-Celt that McArthur identifies, it is revealing to note that Julie Watt (1984) discusses a similar structural opposition in her analysis of *Take the High Road*, where 'the underlying source of dramatic conflict in the serial is between the locals who wish to run their own lives - by, for example, trout and deer farming, and commercial peat cutting - and the moneyed entrepreneurs who wish to use Glendarroch for tourist purposes, or, previously, the MoD, who were building a military establishment' (p. 42); although, as Watt observes, the generic requirements of the serial are such that this conflict cannot be resolved. But this structural opposition is not limited to Scotland, Will Wright (1975) for instance identifies this opposition as the key narrative structure of Westerns made between 1930 and 1955 such as *Shane*, where lone gunfighters save the town or farmers from gamblers or ranchers. The problem with McArthur's analysis is that it restricts discussion of the structure of the comedies to Scotland; the limits of analysis are the limits of the nation, so that in a strange way it is analysis itself rather than the texts that is constructing national mythologies. My argument then is that McArthur's work probably tells us less about some specific ideological holistic structure underlying modern Scottish myths, and more about the way in which academic arguments work. It could be argued that the crucial question remains precisely what

oppositions are drawn up under the respective opposing factions, but my interest is rather where these oppositions come from in the first place, and my argument is that these oppositions are in no way limited to Scotland and its relation to 'the rest of the west'.

A further problem with the structuralist account of the Romantic 'appropriation' of Scotland is a slippage in the terms employed in discussions of the Grand Dichotomy (Goody, 1977) or core-periphery theory, where it is not clear precisely what it is the core and what is the periphery. Such discussion slips between the terms Scotland, Highland, Highlands and Islands, Celt, and Gael, or more generally the 'periphery', and it is not always clear whether this slippage is an academic one, or a descriptive one. Malcolm Chapman (1978) opens his book with a statement on this issue:

The Highlands and Islands of Scotland occupy a place in Scottish history whose importance is out of all proportion to their economic significance, or to the small population that now occupies these remote and infertile regions. The face that Scotland turns to the rest of the world, is, in many respects, a Highland face. When Scottish identity is sought, it is often by invocation of Highland ways and Highland virtues that it is found. (p. 9)

The Highlands then, have become a synecdoche for the whole of Scotland. But for who? Again, this is not clear, and Chapman himself on the same opening page slips between attributing the ownership of this phenomenon to 'the Lowland imagination', the 'Scottish imagination,' 'Scottish and British history' (p. 9), and later 'a European intellectual tradition' (p. 24), or the 'core'. This is not really a criticism of Chapman, who is sensitive to these distinctions and is partly concerned with this very slippage, but this is not the case with the Scotch Myths critique in general. What needs to be made clear is that these terms are not innocent descriptions of geo-political locations, but terms within a discourse; we are dealing with the geography of the imagination, not the geography of geological and political boundaries.

## **PART TWO: CRITICAL RESERVATIONS**

### **Hegemonic Kitsch**

As we have seen, the Tartanry/Kailyard critique was not limited to the Scotch Myths and



Scotch Reels events and their literature, but became standard in many academic articles on Scottish popular culture in the 1980s. John Caughie (1990) notes that 'the cultural analysis which 'Scotch Reels' articulated [...] has become a kind of critical and educational orthodoxy' (p. 17). In this and the following sections I want to consider some of the problems with this orthodoxy.

One of the key problems of the Scotch Myths account is its failure to engage with the original contexts of the signs' production, distribution and consumption. In the reviews of the Scotch Myths exhibition for instance, the accounts offered fail to engage with the fields of operation of these signs as saleable commodities or aesthetic phenomena. For instance, McArthur (1981) argues that while we tend to describe much of the Tartanry/Kailyard detritus as "kitsch", we must avoid using this term as it 'is a politically defective term, formulated in the academy and functioning in an elitist discourse which pivots on the bourgeois notion of "taste" and makes the wrong kinds of distinctions between "high" art and "popular" art (p. 21). There are a number of problems with this suggestion. Firstly, if we refuse to treat a particular cultural category, in this case kitsch, on its own terms because those terms are ideologically laden then we lose sight of the use to which products within that category are put. Secondly, these uses are themselves highly dependent on the kind of distinctions between high and popular art that McArthur describes as 'wrong'. McArthur is working within a cultural studies discourse that has in a number of ways attempted to break the so called 'culture and civilisation' tradition of Arnold and Leavis, and its polarisation of high and low culture, and this is discussed below. Suffice to say that rather than refusing these distinctions, we should instead attempt to understand how various cultural products operate within them; the status of kitsch within this polarity is central to its appropriation within for instance a camp discourse or one of postmodern irony.

Despite or perhaps because of the hegemony of the Scotch Myth's critique, there exists a marginalised but coherent intellectual counterpoint which, while still concerned with the images and discourses within which Scotland and the Scots have been constructed, takes a radically different view from that of the Scotch Myths authors. In another review of the

Scotch Myths exhibition, P.H. Scott (1981) argued that while the Grigors exposed a particular genre, they were mistaken in their evaluation of its origin and significance. While acknowledging the role of the Scottish Romantics in Europe, Scott argues that the representational strategies of cultural forms such as the comic postcard belong to an older English literary tradition of abuse of the Scots rooted in various long-term national disputes. While Scots are not misled by the comic postcards because they are so obviously removed from modern life, Scott argues that a 'more powerful and subtle' myth exists; 'the view that Scotland before 1707 was backward, bloody and barbarous, that it was saved by the Union, which is seen as an enlightened act of statesmanship, and that thereafter economic progress and civilisation flowed benignly northwards from England' (p. 64). Although this view is historically inaccurate, Scott argues that it has been accepted by Scots and perpetrated by educational establishments, who have marginalised the study of Scottish history and literature and suppressed the study of Gaelic and Scots; the result, he argues, has been a disabling loss of Scottish self-confidence.

Scott's position is given sustained historical and theoretical treatment by Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull (1989), who apply Franz Fanon's (1965) account of cultural inferiorisation to Scottish historiography and readings of Scottish culture. Fanon, a key theorist of colonialism, argued that political control of the colony by the settlers was partly achieved by systematically destroying the natives' sense of local identity, their self-belief, and their belief in the value of their culture. This is achieved through 'a process of mystification - the colonised culture is depicted by the coloniser as impoverished, backward, inferior, primitive' (Beveridge & Turnbull, p. 5). Colonial discourse, argues Fanon 'turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it [...]' The total result looked for by colonial domination was indeed to convince the natives that colonialism came to lighten their darkness' (qtd. in Beveridge & Turnbull, p. 8). Inferiorisation is complete when this message is internalised by the native.

Beveridge and Turnbull compare the inferiorist strategies of colonialism with the language of political debate in Scotland in the 1970s, proposing that the unionist ideologues used exactly the same terms as those identified by Fanon. They argue that examples of



inferiorist discourse are part of an 'underlying code' or 'langue', characterised by a system of oppositions between Scotland and England; the former is seen as fanatical, parochial and primitive, while the latter is seen as reasonable, cosmopolitan and sophisticated. Inferiority, they argue, has been particularly evident in Scottish historiography, where the pre-Union Scottish past is portrayed as backward and barbaric, a view of the Scottish past that is projected onto Scots themselves by successive historians. Like the arrival of the colonisers in Fanon's account, the Union of Parliaments in 1707 transforms Scottish culture, dragging the Scots into the modern era. Beveridge and Turnbull argue that this mythology has been internalised by Scottish intellectuals, with the result that local culture has been reviewed by local intellectuals in a largely negative manner.

In relation to the 'Scotch Myths' exhibition, the subsequent review articles by Paterson and McArthur, and the work of Tom Nairn discussed above, the authors argue that 'the view that popular consciousness is dominated by Tartanry, that the populace is sunk in ignorance and irrationality, accords perfectly with the governing image of Scotland as a dark and backward culture' (p. 14). But this inferiorist approach is not limited to Scottish history and Scottish popular culture, it can be seen more generally in 'the failure of the intellectuals to respond to Scottish traditions which cannot be assimilated to the paradigms of metropolitan culture' (p. 15). According to Beveridge and Turnbull, this manifests itself in the way that academic departments in Scottish universities have marginalised Scottish philosophers in their curriculum, and a similar claim could be made I would argue about the marginalisation of Scottish literature within the literary or 'English Studies' curricula in higher education.

But perhaps the greatest problem with the account of Scottish culture and the Scottish consciousness offered by the whole Scotch Myths critique, is the unsubstantiated claim that Tartanry/Kailyard are indeed hegemonic. For instance, while Macpherson receives much critical attention in the Scotch Myths account, Tobias Smollett, James Boswell and even Robert Burns do not, despite the fact that all three writers, in common with lesser known eighteenth century authors such as John Home, Henry Mackenzie, and Robert Ferguson, all engaged with Scottish subjects. While the Kailyard writers receive much attention, the

social realism of Kailyard contemporary William Alexandar does not, neither does the anti-Kailyard writing of George Blake.<sup>4</sup> Equally, the work of other twentieth century Scottish writers such as Lewis Grassie-Gibson, Neil Gunn, Hugh MacDiarmid, and Sorley Maclean, all of whom have no problem escaping the apparently inescapable clichés of Tartanry and Kailyard in their treatment of both Lowland and Highland Scotland, are ignored.

Similarly, with the exception of Nairn, there is no attempt to engage with Allan Ramsay, David Hume, Adam Ferguson and the Enlightenment in Scotland, which might problematise the attribution of London and the European capitals as the rational 'core' and Scotland as the Romantic 'periphery'. In the light of the sceptical rationalism of David Hume, and his dismissal of all but empirically based knowledge, it is the rest of Europe that could more accurately be characterised as emotional and irrational. Indeed, Kenneth Simpson (1988) has argued that it was precisely their response to both rationalism and Romanticism, and the tension between Scotland's increasing 'Anglicisation' after the Union and the desire to continue working with the native Scottish dialects, that produced such a complex and paradoxical representation of Scotland and the Scot in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. David McCrone (1989) has similarly argued that 'the socio-cultural developments' behind 'the Scottish literary renaissance of the 1920's [...] were rooted in a pluralistic cultural system in Scotland' and that 'spoken language through radio and television has also contributed to a multi-varied culture which cannot in any serious way be reduced to the discourses of Tartanry and Kailyard' (p. 171). What this emphasises is the importance of a cultural history that is as sensitive to the discontinuities and contradictions of its objects of study as it is to its continuities.

The selective reading of Scottish culture is even more acute in the attempt to describe Scottish popular culture today as sunk in Tartanry and Kailyard, a description which simply does not stand up against the heterogeneity of the cultural reality. This is illustrated

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<sup>4</sup>For a discussion of the peripheral place of Kailyard within Victorian popular literature, see Donaldson, 1986.



by the fact that the two recent best selling novels by Scottish writers, set for the most part in Scotland, were Ian Banks' *Complicity* and Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, novels radically different from both Tartanry/Kailyard and each other. Similarly, while McArthur argues that Tartanry was hegemonic in the cinematic representation of Scotland, between 1938 and 1982 out of one hundred and thirty six feature films with Scottish content, there are in fact only four adaptations of Stevenson's *Kidnapped*, four films about the Jacobites and the '45, and one adaptation of *Rob Roy* (cf. McBain, 1990). This problem plagues much of the 1980s literature on the representation of Scotland, which having assumed the existence and dominant position of such a system, then goes out and finds it in texts that it studies.

### Kailyard Literature

If the attribution of hegemony to the Tartanry/Kailyard couplet is highly dubious, then the accounts of those phenomena themselves are equally problematic. In this, and in the following subsection, I shall refer to work which both empirically disputes and theoretically critiques the oversimplified, and unified, deployment of these terms. To take the latter first and return to Cairns Craig's account, while this is not an unfair characterisation of the genre, it is somewhat misleading in that Kailyard did not attempt to represent 'Scotland', as Craig implies, but only and explicitly the village life of the lowlands. Secondly, his account fails to acknowledge that the term 'Kailyard' was actually attached to the genre as a term of abuse only seven years after Barrie had published his *Auld Licht Idylls*, as Roderick Watson (1984), in his history of Scottish literature points out:

The term [Kailyard] comes from the verse epigraph to a collection of tales published by Ian Maclaren in 1894:

There grows a bonnie briar bush in our kail-yard,  
And white are the blossoms on't in our kail-yard.

Within a year W.E. Henley's *New Review* attacked the genre as cabbage-patch - 'Kailyard' - writing, and J.H. Miller, the critic in question, renewed the assault in 1903 in his *History of Scottish Literature*. (p. 314)

In fact, Watson argues that rather than treating Kailyard as a distinct and original genre, it is perhaps more accurately seen as 'a sentimentalised subgenre' of the domestic realism common in Scottish literature up to that point (p. 315). We need to differentiate between

the work of Barrie and the work of other Kailyard writers, and to address the specific conditions of existence of the majority of Kailyard production.<sup>5</sup> Unlike Barrie, the Kailyard writers Ian Maclaren and S.R. Rockett were Free Kirk ministers who published overtly sentimental and pious sketches of their own ministerial lives, in the London based Evangelical periodical the *British Weekly*, established by former Free Kirk minister William Nicoll, and in the Glasgow based Baptist weekly, *Christian Leader* (Watson, 1984, pp. 315-9). Like Watson, T.D. Knowles argues that Kailyard literature is less distinctly Scottish than the Scotch Myths critique would have us believe: 'Their work contained British Victorian elements as well as Scottish; they were regionalists, and there is influence from the gothic novel, the fairy tale, 18th century sentimentalism, and the Victorian penchant for dying and death' (qtd. in McCrone, 1992, p. 179). All of which makes the attribution of Kailyard as a cultural form specifically Scottish in its production, construction and consumption highly problematic. As Dave Wills (1984) suggests: 'The literary critics may view the film and media theorists as *arrivistes* who have recently discovered Scotland yet know precious little about forty years of debates about Scottish literature' (p. 42).

According to Julie Watt (1984), John Caughie's (1982) contribution to the Scotch Myths debate 'implies that STV's continuous serial *Take the High Road* reproduces and reinforces the traditional Tartan and Kailyard representations of Scotland' (p. 41). Watt's critique of this position, founded on an examination of the institutional conditions of existence of the programmes production, is indicative of the form of cultural analysis I would support. Understanding why the programme is as it is requires attention both to the political economy of regional and ITV scheduling in 1979, and to general features of the soap-opera genre:

the IBA policy regarding networked programmes is that they should reflect the ethos and experience of the regions from which they are drawn: the producers of *Take the High Road* felt that if they offered a serial set in an urban area, there might be little about it that was specifically Scottish. There are three areas of modern Scottish

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<sup>5</sup>Watson (1984) argues that Barrie's writing is explicitly aware that 'Thrums', the village based on his childhood in Kirriemuir and his mother's childhood memories of her own, is far from idyllic (p. 314-5)



experience which, they felt, are peculiarly Scottish, as opposed to British: crofting, microelectronics and oil. Since they dismissed the urban experience as not being specifically Scottish, crofting was chosen as the background for the serial. It was felt that the city viewers could easily identify with such problems as loneliness, unemployment, the black economy, and so on, which might crop up in a rural setting. (p. 41)

Further, the fact that the serial is set on the shores of Loch Lomond, is partly explained by the fact that 'the extremely tight filming schedules mean that the locations must be within a half hour's radius of the Cowcaddens studios' (p. 43). Moreover, while Watt does not deny that there are commonalities between the serial and Kailyard literature, she argues that this is true of British soap-opera in general. 'The circumscribed setting, the restricted cast, the episodic storylines are a result of the economic, institutional and technological constraints which condition the format', similarly 'the preservation of a set of moral values is also characteristic of the serial' (p. 43). The kind of relation between literary and media genres suggested here is precisely the kind of relation that this thesis is concerned to investigate.

### **Tartanry and Romanticism**

Like its treatment of Kailyard, the treatment of Tartanry and Romanticism in the Scotch Myths literature is also problematic. The distinction between Tartanry and Scottish Romanticism in the critique is difficult to pin down. The term 'Tartanry' seems to oscillate between at its narrowest 'a shorthand for the set of garish symbols appropriated by Music Hall (and Harry Lauder) in the 1920s and 1930s' (McCrone, Morris & Kiely, 1995, p. 50), and at its widest any and every aspect of Scottish culture that bears the influence of Romanticism, from Macpherson and Scott to Royal Mile tourist shops. Nevertheless, a number of key themes emerge; the impact of 'European Romanticism', the representation of the Highland landscape, the centrality of the work of James Macpherson and Walter Scott, and the importance of the Jacobite Rebellion and its defeat at Culloden.

The first problem is the way in which Walter Scott's work is treated as both the epitome and cause of the Romantic appropriation of Scotland. The second problem is the account of Romanticism that is offered in this treatment. Cairns Craig (1982) selects the following passage from Scott's *Waverley* as an example of the Romantic vision of Scotland:

... A short turning in the path...suddenly placed Waverley in front of a romantic



waterfall ... After a broken cataract of about twenty feet, the stream was received in a large natural basin filled to the brim with water, which, when the bubbles of the fall subsided, was so exquisitely clear that, although it was of great depth, the eye could discern each pebble at the bottom. Eddying round this reservoir, the brook found its way over a broken part of the ledge, and formed a second fall, which seemed to seek the very abyss ... The borders of this romantic reservoir corresponded in beauty; but it was beauty of a stern and commanding cast, as if in the act of expanding into grandeur ...

... Here, like one of those lovely forms which decorate the landscapes of Poussin, Waverley found Flora gazing on the waterfall. Two paces further back stood Cathleen, holding a small Scottish harp ... The sun, now stooping in the west, gave a rich and varied tinge to all the objects which surrounded Waverley, and seemed to add more than human brilliancy to the full expressive darkness of Flora's eye, exalted the richness and purity of her complexion, and enhanced the dignity and grace of her beautiful form. Edward thought that he had never, even in his wildest dreams, imagined a figure of such exquisite and interesting loveliness. (*Waverley*, chap xxii, qtd. in Craig, pp. 7-8, parenthesis in original quotation)

According to Craig, this entire passage 'is an embodiment of the highest flights of the imagination: the setting has all the awe-inspiring grandeur of the sublime. [...] Flora is here the archetype of Romantic Scotland, a world that had not been demeaned by modern civilisation' (p. 8). But there are two problems with this account; firstly, the application of the notion of the sublime to the second paragraph is incorrect, secondly, Flora's function in the novel is entirely to do with political and historical changes in 'modern civilisation' that were taking place during the period about which Scott is writing. As both these points resonate throughout the Scotch Myths critique I will look at them in some detail.

The waterfall which appears to plunge into the abyss and the imagination of Waverley's wildest dreams are part of a Romantic discourse in art and literature which valued power and mystery in nature and placed great importance on the individual's imagination. The sublime has a long, continuing, and shifting etymology which is not limited to its employment in aesthetics. In the fourteenth century, sublime appears in scientific discourse; the act of sublimation refers to the process whereby a substance such as mercury is heated in a vessel in order to then cool it into a vapour which is then carried off and on cooling deposited in a solid form. In the early seventeenth century, sublime appears in general discourse to refer to the highest point or something of great height, and is similarly applied to individuals with a lofty bearing. Sublime is also used as a derogatory term to refer to someone of a haughty or proud bearing. In the second half of the seventeenth



century to be sublime is to be exalted in feeling, and the term is used to refer to ideas that belong to the highest regions of thought. From 1700 onwards, sublime is finally used to refer to things in nature and art 'affecting the mind with a sense of overwhelming grandeur or irresistible power; calculated to inspire awe, deep reverence, or lofty emotion, by reason of its beauty vastness, or grandeur' (OED), and the sublime has remained an important term in contemporary critical discourse. Writing on the role of the sublime in eighteenth century Northern Romanticism, Robert Rosenblum (1983) cites the following passage from Goethe, writing in 1771:

I felt myself exalted by this overflowing fullness to the perception of the Godhead, and the glorious forms of the infinite universe stirred within my soul! Stupendous mountains encompassed me, abysses yawned at my feet, and cataracts fell headlong down before me; rivers rolled through the plains below, and rocks and mountains resounded from afar. (Goethe qtd. in Rosenblum, pp. 314-5)

Scott's description of Waverley's feelings produced by seeing Flora are of a rather different nature than Goethe's description of his experience of the high mountains of Europe. In fact, I will argue that Scott's description of the landscape owes as much to the idyllic landscapes of the seventeenth century classicists as it does to the wild landscapes of nineteenth century romantics. The key question is what is a reference to the landscape paintings of the Roman campagna by Nicolas Poussin, a seventeenth century French Classicist, doing in a description of the Highland landscape of Scotland by a nineteenth century Scottish Romantic? Poussin, and other artists such as Claude Lorraine (1600-1682), produced 'ideal landscapes', paintings inspired by the countryside around Rome that evoked the myth of the Golden Age, paintings which were carefully composed according to particular conventions of form and harmony:

The foreground would consist of a more or less flat plain, often with a stream running through it. To one side and generally rising the whole height of the picture would be a tree or group of trees with spreading foliage, seen partly in shadow and silhouetted against the sky. On or towards the other side and set further back in space there would be a second group of smaller trees, balancing the first, often near some rising ground surmounted by a classical building. The distance would consist of further flat ground, possibly with a winding river, and, on the horizon, a faint line of hills or a view of the sea. Two other essential ingredients were figures, often drawn from some story in the Bible or classical mythology, and an all-pervading light. (Kitson, 1985, p. 666)

In the mid-eighteenth century this representational technology can be seen regulating the



works of English landscape painters such as Richard Wilson and John Inigo Richards. For Wilson, Richards, and the classical landscape painters, their art was an exercise in compositional control according to a set of shared rigid principles, for the Romantic landscape painters, their art was an expression of their personal relationship with the environment governed only by the individual principles they developed themselves. More generally, at the centre of classicism was the conviction that art should appeal not to the senses, but to the mind, while the Romantics held precisely the reverse. The detail and harmony of Scott's composition of the landscape and description of Flora, and the way in which the sun, like a painting by Claude Lorraine, bathes the objects in a serene light, owes a lot, as the author himself suggests, to the classical landscape painters of the seventeenth century. Waverley perceives the scene to be *like a picture*; in other words the beauty of the landscape is not in this instance of the sublime but of the picturesque. The two are mutually exclusive terms, the picturesque operates in a similar manner to the ideal landscapes of the French Classicists, requiring both a rigid and prescribed content and composition and a detachment of the senses, whereas the sublime requires exactly the reverse. This is not to argue that the picturesque had no place in Romanticism; many picturesque tourists in Scotland carried copies of Macpherson's *Ossian* with them and much value was placed on the ability to contrast the sublimity of Glencoe with the picturesque nature of Loch Lomond.

By the time Scott was writing, the picturesque tour of Scotland was already well established. William Gilpin toured Scotland in 1776, and his experiences and recommendations to future picturesque tourists were published in his *Observations, relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1776, on Several Parts of Great Britain; particularly the High-Lands of Scotland*. While the extract from *Waverley* features certain objects and ideas associated with Romanticism, Scott's imaginative geography of the Highlands filters these elements through a classical and picturesque form. Indeed, the explicit association in the Scotch Myths critique of Scott's novels with the Highlands is misleading; much of the action of *Waverley* is set in Edinburgh, as is *Heart of Midlothian*, and England; *Ivanhoe* is set in 13th century England; while many of Scott's



other romances are set on the continent. *The Lady of the Lake* is set in the Trossachs, celebrated in Scott's day for its picturesqueness rather than its sublimity. Indeed, most of the action in Scotland in *Waverley* takes place in and around those places visited by Gilpin himself on what was by that time known as 'The Short Tour of Scotland': 'Edinburgh - Stirling - Perth - Dunkeld - Taymouth - Killin - Loch Awe - Inverary - Loch Lomond - Glasgow and the Falls of the Clyde' (Andrews, 1989, p. 206).

It is also quantitatively demonstrable that the extract from *Waverley* in question is *not* typical of the rest of Scott's novel, in that the majority of the novel is not taken up with descriptions of Highland landscape but with the action and politics of fictional and historical characters. It is not appropriate to argue, as Craig does, that 'for Scott, the world of the Jacobites is a world as false to the true needs of civilisation as Barrie's Auld Lights are to the true needs of culture' (p. 9); this is as reductionist a reading of Scott's work as it is of Barrie's. Scott, as Lukacs argues, can be credited with 'inventing' the historical novel; in terms of the representation of Scotland, Scott's significance is as much as a national historian as a writer of Romantic fiction. *Waverley*, as a historical novel, is explicitly a political piece of work, with endless pages of text and footnotes devoted to the changing relation between state and nation that characterised the period he was describing and the subsequent years up to the writing of the novel. This point is well made by Roderick Watson (1984):

Scott thought that he had come to terms with these changes, but his feelings were crucially ambivalent. As a Lowland Tory and a Unionist, he was half in love with a warlike Stuart cause. As a man of aristocratic prejudices, and a lifelong opponent of the Reform Bill, he delighted in the oral tradition and the sturdy independence of common Scots folk. These are the conflicting claims at the heart of his novels, in which he places ordinary people at a time of violent change. (p. 255)

Edward, the central character of the novel, is torn between his loyalty to his English regiment, his family's house and the crown, and his sympathies with the rebelling clans, his admiration for the Pretender, and his devotion to Flora.

Alongside the partiality of the Scotch Myths accounts of the relationship between Romanticism and aesthetics, is a more general lack of awareness of the cultural history of the 'romantic' itself. In the accounts of Tartanry, the Romantic movement is given a

privileged position both in terms of its hegemony and its originary status. But this is highly problematic, as the etymology of the term 'romantic' begins to indicate. Indeed, the term is doubly complex, as Raymond Williams (1983) makes clear: 'Romantic is a complex word because it takes its modern senses from two distinguishable contexts: the content and character of romances, and the content and character of the Romantic movement. The latter is usually dated to late eighteenth and early nineteenth century; it is in itself exceptionally complex and diverse' (p. 274).

Williams argues that before the mid 16th century, 'romance' referred to the medieval romances, the verse tales of adventure and chivalric love (cf. de Troyes, 1987; von Eschenbach, 1987; Malory, 1986). From the mid sixteenth century a new kind of prose romance became popular, based mainly on sixteenth century Spanish forms and characterized by a freedom of imagination that went beyond the codes of feudal chivalry and Christian morality that structured the actions and concerns of its predecessors. Romantic was now applied to landscapes and scenes in nature too, often to describe the mountains, forests and wild places commonly associated with the old romances. In the early nineteenth century, German writers began to distinguish between the Romantic, as a new kind of description of a literary, artistic and philosophical movement, and the Classical (Furst, 1973). However, it was not until the 1880s that the term was applied specifically to the Romantic poets, writers and artists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, a period now taken to stretch from the publication of Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 to the death of Scott in 1832. As each successive use of the term carries within it traces of its former uses, it is possible to see in *Waverley* features of the earlier fields of its use; the feudal system of the clans is not dissimilar to that of knights of Arthur's court, and Waverley's relationship with Flora has more in common with the codes of chivalric love than its does with Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, although it has this novel's imaginative freedom and swashbuckling narrative.

Losing sight of the cultural history that both the works of the Romantic period and the uses of the term carry, results in a highly problematic attribution of a privileged originary moment to Scott's work in relation to the representation of Scotland, and to the Romantic



movement in general. In fact the discourse referred to as Romanticism operates in the fields of anthropology and philosophical nationalism as much as it does in the literary and aesthetic spheres. Finally, the oversimplified concept of causality and privileging of continuity that marks this treatment of history is particularly evident in the use of the undifferentiated category of 'tradition'. To describe Tartanry as a 'tradition of representation' is to unify its disparate elements too easily, and to ignore the specific conditions of its appearance and reappearance.

A further example of the problems this treatment causes is in Craig's description of the representation of the Highlanders as one of 'tartan noble savagery'. Craig is referring to the concept of the noble savage, a term coined by Dryden and given philosophical elaboration in the work of the French social theorist, Jean Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau's contribution to primitivism in works such as the *Discourse on the Origin of the Inequality between Mankind* (1755) included an egalitarian critique of contemporary French society. Rousseau argues that one of the key problems with so-called civilisation is the ownership of property; such ownership, he maintained, resulted in inequality, envy and depravity. A return to nature would be a return to what he called 'the first social state', a rudimentary communal organisation based on sharing. Rousseau's ideas, and primitivism in general, certainly found a place in the conceptual field that Romanticism operated within, and in England the idealisation of 'simple' rural life can be seen in the poetry and writing of William Wordsworth and the paintings of John Constable and Samuel Palmer, none of whom found it necessary to turn to the so called Celtic or primitive peripheries. However, Rousseau's democratic doctrine does not sit easily with the hierarchical, patriarchal society of the clan, a social structure that reflects the land-owning aristocracy Rousseau was so opposed to rather than providing an egalitarian alternative. While it is fair to say that the Scotch Myths writers were writing about the way in which these groups were represented, rather than their social reality, their accounts do not do justice to the complexity of Romanticism and its relation to primitivism.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>For an extended discussion of primitivism, Romanticism and Scotland see Chapman, 1978, pp. 33-47.

Indeed, it is possible to argue that many so called Romantic representations of the Scottish Highlands were in fact socially conservative in their idealisation of clan society. It comes as no surprise then that General Wade, the man whose road building activities in Scotland were a key part of the strategies to bring the rest of the Scots under Anglicised rule, wrote to the king expressing how impressed he was by the rigid hierarchical social structure of the clan system and the loyalty shown by the clansmen to their chief. Further, Trevor Pringle (1988) has argued that at the end of the Romantic era a Victorian Highland myth emerges in which 'royal imposition and appropriation of the Scottish landscape and Scottish history' (p. 146) are naturalised in paintings of pastoral landscapes and the royal family, particularly in the work of Edwin Landseer commissioned by Queen Victoria herself.

Given this account of Landseer's work, is it possible to argue, as McArthur (1981) does, that 'both in subject matter and style, a line can be drawn between the great landscape artist of German Romanticism, Caspar David Friedrich, to Horatio McCulloch, the Landseers and other British artists who rendered the Highlands in a Romantic rhetoric' (p. 22)? Again this is to unify the disparate elements of Romanticism too easily. There is little if anything in common between Caspar David Friedrich's philosophical location and artistic evocation of a mystical divinity in nature (Rosenblum, 1983), and Landseer's legitimation of the Victorian monarchy's presence in Scotland. Even McCulloch's *Glencoe* (1864), probably the artist's most consistently publicly exhibited and most reproduced painting, while Romantic in the sense of an imaginative and evocative treatment of an established sublime subject, the Three Sisters of Glencoe and the site of the massacre, operates in a different field from Friedrich, as the fact that the painting was made from an already well-established viewpoint, the rock platform known as the study, begins to indicate. In fact there are probably only two paintings of Scottish landscapes that operate in the same field as Friedrich, Turner's painting of the Cuillins in Skye *Loch Coruisk* (1833), and John Martin's imaginative Highland landscape in *Macbeth* (c.1850); in each painting human figures are physically and spiritually dwarfed by the awe-full physicality of the landscape.

In general then, the key problem with the histories of the representation of Scotland that



have been constructed, is the notion that Scotland's cultural history can be treated as a 'tradition of representation'. The way that the notion of 'tradition' is employed in cultural history is, as Foucault (1972) argues, problematic:

Take the notion of tradition: it is intended to give a special temporal status to a group of phenomena that are both successive and identical (or at least similar); it makes it possible to rethink the dispersion of history in the form of the same; it allows a reduction of the difference proper to every beginning, in order to pursue without discontinuity the endless search for the origin; tradition enables us to isolate the new against a background of permanence, and to transfer its merit to originality, to genius, to the decisions proper to individuals. (p. 21)

Like romance, the sublime and the picturesque are terms with their own historical circumstances; their shifting operation within the representation of Scotland over the last three hundred or so years demonstrates the fallibility of arguing for the existence of a 'tradition of representation' that arose from the conjunction of European Romanticism and lowland Kailyard literature. In principle what I am arguing is that the Tartanry/Kailyard hegemony is not a cultural hegemony but the product of a particular academic discourse. This is not to argue that we should do away with these terms all together, but that we need to tighten up the way in which they have been used in academic discourse on the representation of Scotland for the last fifteen years in a way that acknowledges the domains and limits of their operation.

### **National Identity and National Culture**

The Scotch Myths critique and the debates that followed it were partly motivated by the belief that the narratives, myths and images of cultural texts have a direct and determining effect on Scottish national identity. As we have seen, McArthur (1981) argues that for the last one hundred and fifty years or so Scots have been interpellated into the ideology of the Tartanry/Kailyard hegemony, 'their consciousness being defined within the limits of the system' (p. 21). Indeed, both Paterson and McArthur argue that 'experiencing' Tartanry/Kailyard brings into consciousness 'the complex articulation of attitudes to history, to nationhood and to political decisions in the here and now, which it is its objective function to serve' (p. 22). There is an interesting slippage in the logic of their argument from one element of the Tartanry/Kailyard system, to the system as a whole, and

then on to a fully fledged political project. In general, the model of identity employed by the Scotch myths debate is inadequate, and is illustrative of Schlesinger's (1991) argument that in the fields of communication and cultural studies 'national identity' has functioned as a largely untheorised 'all-purpose catchword' (pp. 138-9). Schlesinger argues that it is within the cultural imperialism thesis, 'the need to safeguard domestic production' against culturally and industrially harmful imports, that much of the use of these concepts has occurred (p. 143).

Chapman's (1978) notion of symbolic appropriation can be seen as the accompanying project to cultural imperialism. Chapman's central thesis is as follows: 'The majority society has used Gaelic culture as a symbolic element in a process of defining itself, and consequently Gaelic culture is only present in English literary discourse in a shape that has been imposed upon it from without' (pp. 27-8). This thesis is weakened however by the fact that, as Schlesinger argues, 'the *implications* of such cultural flows for those who consume them remain largely obscure' (p. 148). Drawing on extensive literature in the social sciences, Schlesinger argues that national identity 'is to be understood as a particular kind of collective identity. In other words, it is an identity constituted at a given strategic level of a society. In formal terms, to talk of national identity requires us to analyse processes of inclusion and exclusion. We are also obliged to consider the dialectic between internal and external definition' (p. 173). While he acknowledges that cultural producers play a part in these processes, particularly with regard to constructing an imaginary relationship between the past of a nation and its present, it is clear that the narrow textual focus of the Scotch Myths theorists and their model of identity are inadequate.

Drawing on Schlesinger's work, we can see that the Scotch Myths critique failed to consider two key questions: Firstly, the place of the various texts under critique within the general picture of the management of Scotland's audio-visual space, as this management has consequences for the construction of social identity; in other words, whether the texts promote social integration at a local level, at an international level, or whether they 'nationalise' social space, thus contributing to the formation of a national public sphere (Schlesinger, pp. 144-8). In the same vein we would have to consider the texts' distribution



patterns and ask whether consumption was limited to major urban centres, or whether they received extensive national distribution, thus contributing to the idea of simultaneity essential in the imagining of the national community. Secondly, the texts need to be examined as part of the management of Scotland's semantic field, not only in terms of how they are themselves part of that culture, but also how in documenting Scotland's culture, they construct and maintain it.

The unquestioned and untheorised assumption of the existence of a Scottish 'national culture' has been the focus of a sustained attack by David McCrone (1989, 1992, & 1995). McCrone (1989), focusing on Nairn and McArthur, argues that theorists have failed to acknowledge that after 1918, any cultural hegemony that England may have held in Britain collapsed, and that from this point "English culture" could no longer be equated with "the culture of England" (p. 171), and that the same is true of Scotland. I would argue that this in fact goes back a lot further, to nineteenth century industrialisation and urbanisation, and the emergence of a working class or popular culture. The search for a 'true' national culture that McCrone argues drives the Scotch Myths critique is therefore pointless, and he rejects the notion that the Tartanry/Kailyard hegemony dominates Scotland's national culture. Framing the question in terms of a 'Scottish national culture', he argues, can only result in an 'essentially 'internalist' account of Scotland' that hides the point that 'in modern pluralistic societies no single 'national' culture is to be found' (p. 172).

Although I am largely sympathetic to McCrone's account, I would argue that national culture continues to function as a key term in cultural and political debate in ways that cannot simply be dismissed as 'illegitimate', but must be addressed by cultural theorists. Paul Gilroy (1987) for instance has argued that in Britain the politics of 'race' are fired by conditions of national belonging and homogeneity which not only blur the distinction between 'race' and nation, but rely on that very ambiguity for their effect', so that the 'nation is represented in terms which are simultaneously biological and cultural' (p. 45). The root of the problem, Gilroy argues, is that behind the British conception of nationhood lies an ethnic absolutist theory of culture and identity. 'Race' is denied its status as 'a meaningful biological category', and is reworked instead 'as a cultural issue' (p. 59); this

cultural definition of 'race' is also crucial for questions of Scottish culture because as Gilroy argues, it is sometimes used to define the English, Scots, Welsh and Irish as separate races. We will return to Gilroy's argument in Chapter Four.

National culture could also be seen as a site of negotiation and contestation between the official 'national culture' and popular culture. This is the position adopted by James Donald (1988) in an article on the 'invention' and 'imagining' of Englishness, who distinguishes three broad areas in which such a struggle takes place: 'first, specific nationalist ideologies (whether imperialist, isolationist, or liberationist); second, a communality figured as a narrative of nationhood (Anderson's imagined community); and, third, the apparatus of discourses, technologies, and institutions (print capitalism, education, mass media, and so forth) which 'produces' what is generally recognised as "the national culture"' (p. 4). What is produced, he argues, is not a single coherent identity, but a 'cultural and social heterogeneity', however, this plurality 'is given a certain fixity by the articulating principle of "the nation"' (p. 4); drawing attention, as both Schlesinger and Gilroy do, to the role of boundary marking in cultural and national differentiation.

For a model of the processes involved in the struggle over national culture, Donald turns to Bakhtin's model of culture as 'a field in which the forces of identity, standard speech and the state exert a centripetal pull against the centrifugal forces of cultural difference, linguistic variation and carnival' (p. 5); Donald argues that the 'fixity of the national' is in a state of tension with the 'plurality of the popular' which reproduces the tension between the two poles. The production of the official national culture is thus seen not only as part of an attempt to manage the semantic field, but also as part of an attempt to define and maintain a national public or people-nation (this is returned to in the next chapter). In summary we can see then that both Scottish national culture and Scottish identity, while delimited by geo-political boundaries, have no fixed or stable content or substance; they are grounds managed by different institutions and contested in different discourses.



## PART THREE: BEYOND HERMENEUTICS

### The Conditions of Existence of the Scotch Myths Critique

Despite their internal differences and theoretical inadequacies, the major significance of the Scotch Myths and Scotch Reels events and the subsequent review articles and essays, is, I would argue, that they mark the historical point where the *representation* of Scotland becomes an object of academic concern. As John Caughie (1990) argues, while the Scotch Myths critique 'no longer seems adequate as a way of thinking about a more extensive Scottish film culture only eight years later' (pp. 17-18):

'Scotch Reels' does seem important as a particular moment at which the idea of a Scottish cinema began to take on some material force for many people who had not hitherto been directly involved in its production. More than that, in the event and the publication, 'Scotch Reels' did articulate a coherent cultural analysis of the representation of Scotland in film and television. However preliminary, polemical and 'of its time' that analysis may now seem, it will be difficult for any new analysis to ignore it. (p. 14)

It is interesting that while Scottish culture had for many years been the object of academic inquiry across disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, history, and literary studies, it is only in the early 1980s that it becomes the object of media and cultural studies. We need to continue to address two questions: why did such an academic space open up, and with what kind of critical discourse did it operate? In other words, we are interested in this discourse's conditions of existence. These, I would argue, are a combination of institutional and historical shifts and interventions, some of which have already been discussed in the previous chapter. We might identify the expansion of film and television studies over the 1970s and the broadening of its conceptual field beyond questions of realism, to include for example the question of national cinema; the impact of Cultural Studies, in particular its commitment to broader questions of popular culture beyond the question of the mass media; the establishment in 1980 of two journals, *Bulletin of Scottish Politics* and *Cencrastus*, devoted to a critical and academic analysis of Scottish culture and its relation to the political sphere. Finally, we can also point to the way in which the nation, nationalism, national culture and national identity, have become 'key issues that have marked our political life in recent years' (Schlesinger, 1991, p. vii), and have also

become key issues for media and cultural theorists.

But the critique of the representation of Scotland, like the critique of the documentary film, operates within what Toby Miller (1993) has described as 'the discourse of reflectionism', a discourse whose conceptual framework is premised on a particular articulation of the relationship between the text on one hand, and history, society and culture on the other (pp. 49-67). Reflectionism, a pedagogical strategy whose central concept is that of ideology, sees the text as a symptom of this wider context; the goal of the textual analysis of cultural products is, according to Miller, to read or diagnose the text for the ideological symptoms of the twin diseases of capitalism and patriarchy. For Miller, there is a 'double bind' involved in this operation: 'The presumption that there is a domain that is ideological involves an identification of the knowing, speaking subject who dares to apply such a title to a body of work, simultaneously ripping the stuffing out of the concept. For once ideology is named, its work is over, because another kind of misrepresentative spy network of distortions must replace the revealed system' (p. 53). However, for Miller, it is not only that this project of ideological demystification can ultimately never be realised, but also that this project implicitly resurrects mimetic evaluation; the concept of representation loses any usefulness as a conceptual tool as it always already carries within it the charge of the misrepresentation that any selective account of the real necessarily entails.

The subject qualified to speak within the discourse of reflectionism is the cultural critic. Operating from the institutional site of the academy, the critic's role is, as Miller puts it, 'to break the circuit between ideology and public' (p. 62). At this point I want to suggest that the discourse of reflectionism is in fact part of the larger project of the cultural studies movement that Ian Hunter (1992) characterises as a technology of aesthetics. Tracing the genealogy of this technology, Hunter argues that it was 'within the literary, artistic and philosophical shift away from classicism at the turn of the eighteenth century known as Romanticism that the ethic of the aesthetic emerged in German philosophical and religious circles' (p. 35). Within this technology, one of the devices through which individuals occupy the subject position of the aesthetic ethos is through 'the distinct but interlocking



figures of the dissociated sensibility and the divided or alienated society':

Through the figure of the dissociated sensibility certain individuals learn to relate to themselves as bearers of an imbalanced, fragmented-hence incomplete-inner being. And through that of the alienated society it becomes possible for them to relate their personal incompleteness to a fundamental social fragmentation-the division of labour and classes-which plays the roles of both symptom and cause of the inner division. (p. 351)

For a Romantic such as Friedrich Schiller, culture's task is to police or administer the warring sensuous and rational drives of the fragmented self; aesthetic culture is a technology of the self whose ethical work the individual directs at their own incomplete being with the objective of preparing the self for entrance to the ultimately unreachable goal of 'the many-sided personality and the organic or "non-alienated" society' (p. 354). As Hunter implies, these ethical goals were not unique to Schiller's time; we can point not only to Marx's work on labour and alienation, Freud and the divide between id and ego, and Sartre on bad faith, but also to a major strand in cultural studies from Raymond Williams onwards. The implication of Hunter's argument is that not only is aesthetics not an ideology, but also that much of the cultural studies project is itself an aesthetic activity. The discursive field within which the *Scotch Myths* critique operates is aesthetics as a technology or practice of the self.

Thus, unaware of its own conditions of existence, the model of cultural interpellation offered by this critique, whereby Scots find their selves defined within the limited and regressive discourses of Tartanry and Kailyard, is problematic. This model rests on the cultural studies notion that, as Hunter argues, 'the subject of aesthetics sits spellbound in a specular relation to the object of its own reified consciousness' (p. 356), unlike the cultural critic who has successfully completed the process of aesthetic contemplation and is not fooled by the aesthetic object. The critical subject is therefore placed higher up the ethical hierarchy of aesthetics, distinguished from ordinary Scots by their knowledge of a set of disciplinary practices. The upshot for cultural studies is, as Hunter argues, that we should abandon our 'profoundly aesthetic critique of aesthetics' (p. 349). In the case of the *Scotch Myths* debate, to paraphrase Hunter, we might suggest that it should abandon its profoundly Romantic critique of Romanticism.

## The Critical Absence of Films of Scotland

At the start of the thesis, we posed the question of why the Films of Scotland documentaries have received little if any critical attention. The last two chapters have argued that this is largely a consequence of the nature of the academic discourses in which discussion of them might have taken place. We can illustrate this with their brief appearance in McArthur's (1982) discussion of Scottish cinema in *Scotch Reels*. McArthur argues that: 'Films of Scotland can be shown to have given, in many of its films, new and monstrous life to the discourses of Tartanry and Kailyard [and] to have encouraged alternatives to these discourses which were politically inappropriate' (p. 58). As a piece of deliberately naive structuralism, he describes 'the Ur-Tartan Documentary': against an iconography of lochs, crofts, and kilted highlanders shot in autumnal tones the narrator's voice calls up motifs of sadness, dignity, and loss, while plaintive Scottish folk songs are played on a traditional Scottish instrument. Extracts from actual commentaries are chosen to highlight a preoccupation with the past, romance and defeat, where the tone is one of nostalgia or lament (p. 59). There is no doubting the validity of McArthur's particular examples. But firstly, as we shall see, they are not in fact representative of the Committee's production, and secondly, I have argued that the theoretical position that this critique rests on is conceptually and historically inadequate (although McArthur's subsequent suggestion of a relation between the choice of representational strategies in the documentaries, and the producing and funding institutions (p. 58) is one that is pursued in the following chapter).

Against the Tartanry/Kailyard 'hegemony', and the 'inappropriate realism' of the 'Scotland on the Move' films, McArthur identifies a small number of documentaries produced after the mid-1960s, that he argues problematise these discourses. While these films contain imagery from these discourses, he argues that their use of parody, irony, and humour is ideologically subversive. This argument reappears in McArthur's (1983a) championing of Murray Grigor's film *Scotch Myths* (1983), a combination of the exhibition of the same name and Grigor's play, *Breeksadoon*, 'which took as its central metaphor for the construction of Scottish history the blending of whisky' (p. 33). What McArthur admires is



Grigor's modernist style, which abandons classical narrative's unity of time and place to carry out an ideological interrogation of Scottish myths. Similarly, the television adaptation of *The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black, Black Oil*, had in an earlier piece by McArthur (1980) been validated for its transgression 'of the dominant features of both bourgeois historiography and bourgeois drama' (p. 51). McArthur's suggestion that this film 'ought really to be discussed in relation to the theory and practice of Bertolt Brecht' (p. 54, footnote), indicates the extent to which his discussion of documentary, and Films of Scotland in particular, remains within the film studies discourse discussed in the previous chapter.

This is a discourse which attempts to differentiate between regressive and progressive texts, legitimating the reflexivity of the latter as a form of avant-garde practice. But this position is highly problematic both in terms of its reading of Brecht (cf. Mercer, 1986), and its contribution to the intellectuals' monopolisation of cultural capital (cf. Garnham & Williams, 1990). Also, while it legitimates some documentaries, it marginalises others including, in this instance, the majority of those produced by Films of Scotland. Paradoxically then, in narrowing the subject of its own critique from Scottish popular culture in general to Scottish media, particularly film, the critique of the representation of Scotland firmly located itself within a discourse that, with its conceptual baggage of realism, the progressive text and the avant-garde, could find nothing meaningful to say about 'conventional' documentaries. When Scottish film is discussed, it is feature length fiction film. Further, the possibility of relations existing between Scottish media culture and discourses other than Tartanry and Kailyard is denied. Again, this has the effect of marginalising the Films of Scotland documentaries, which, I hope to demonstrate in the following chapters, reproduce a wide range of cultural and discursive formations that are by no means limited to the Tartanry/Kailyard 'hegemony'.

The problems I have posed regarding both the critique of the documentary film and the critique of the representation of Scotland centre on one key element, the status of the text within the critique. Foucault (1972) has summarised this status as follows:

ever since a discipline such as history has existed, documents have been used,

questioned, and have given rise to questions; scholars have asked not only what these documents meant, but also whether they were telling the truth, and by what right they could claim to be doing so, whether they were sincere or deliberately misleading, well informed or ignorant, authentic or tampered with. But each of these questions, and all the critical concern, pointed to one and the same end: the reconstitution, on the basis of what the documents say, and sometimes merely hint at, of the past from which they emanate and which has now disappeared far behind them. (p. 6)

Both documentary film and the representation of Scotland have been subject to these sorts of questions, but from two different positions. We saw in Chapter One, that documentary film was criticised for claiming privileged access to the real, whereas this chapter has reviewed the way in which representations of Scotland have been criticised for failing to offer access to the real. In other words, documentary film and representations of Scotland have been criticised within the same discourse, but on opposite sides of the reflectionist problematic. In both cases however, the preoccupation with the relation of representation between text and reality makes it impossible to examine the *positivity* (see below) of Scottish documentary film.

### **The Archaeological Method**

Regardless of their specific positions, all the critiques of the representation of Scotland discussed in this chapter have particular areas of agreement: the systematic nature of the way Scotland has been represented; the desirability of replacing the notion of stereotype with that of discourse; the way in which these discourses are limited in number and hegemonic; the way these discourses organise the representation of Scotland around a structure of binary oppositions; and the politically inappropriate nature of these discourses and their disabling effect on Scottish identity. This chapter has set out to summarise these positions, draw attention to their theoretical inadequacies, and to situate the critique historically and institutionally. In this final section, I want to continue to lay out the theoretical ground of the chapters to come by examining the deployment of the term 'discourse' within the Scotch Myths critique.

Drawing on Foucault's work on discourse and Edward Said's (1979) application of this work to the Orient, Ian Bell (1990) gives the term 'Scotticism' to that body of work composed of academic and popular accounts of Scotland, 'and all the ways Scotland has



represented itself and been represented to the world at large' (p. 6). Bell maps out the similarities between the representation of the Orient, and the representation of Scotland since the eighteenth century, arguing that within a British context Scotticism is part of a structure of cultural management and power whereby only particular representations which take basic distinctions between Scotland and the rest of Britain as their starting point are authorised. Bell argues that together these practices comprise a 'discourse' in the sense elaborated by Foucault:

The accumulated imagery of Scotland in all these texts and contexts, held together by the ideological cement of a clearly defined 'national character', becomes first of all a repository of knowledge, invested with academic authority and popular appeal. Subsequently, from pretending to 'describe' certain essential features of Scottishness, this discourse sets the agenda for future 'creations', and actually provides restrictive and exhaustive criteria for the recognition of anything Scottish. (Bell, 1990, p. 6)

Both Said and Bell attempt to extend Foucault's conception of a discourse into the area of cultural representation, and both identify a discourse that functions in a systematic manner in its essentialist representation of a culture in popular and academic texts. To that extent, the comparison of 'Scotticism' to Orientalism is convincing. But there is a problem in identifying these strategies as Foucaultian discourses. In an essay on Said's *Orientalism* James Clifford (1988) argues that while 'Said is perfectly correct to identify retrospectively a "discourse" that dichotomises and essentialises in its portrayal of others and that functions in a complex but systematic way as an element of colonial domination [...] the discourse should not be closely identified with the specific tradition of Orientalism' (p. 268). Like Said, the discourse that Bell identifies operates within a wider field than Bell acknowledges; its application is not limited to Scotland. Similarly, I argued of McArthur and Craig for instance that they fail to offer a substantial analysis of how Tartanry differs from Romanticism, or Kailyard from the sentimental novel, that is, why these discourses are specifically Scottish. The problem is partly a methodological one whereby Bell and the authors that preceded him, all attempt, as Clifford puts it, 'to derive a "discourse" directly

from a "tradition" (p. 268), and thus abandon the kind of archaeological analysis described by Foucault.<sup>7</sup>

My argument then is that there are more general discourses at work in the representation of Scotland than many of the writers reviewed in this chapter acknowledge, and that they are mistaken in identifying either Tartanry or Kailyard as fully fledged discursive formations in the Foucaultian sense. At this stage I would like to propose the following model: representations of Scotland draw on a limited set of statements that exist within what we might call a cultural archive, a repository of mimetic capital and knowledge about Scotland invested with the academic authority and popular appeal discussed by Bell and Said. While this archive is specifically concerned with Scotland, like other cultural archives it is informed by discursive formations whose deployment is not limited by national boundaries.

In order to say anything meaningful about Scottish documentary, I have suggested that a shift of the status of the text in such a critique needs to take place. In fact, as we saw in the Introduction, Foucault (1972) argues that such a shift has been taking place within the Humanities since 1969. This movement is characterised as a shift in methodology; from hermeneutics, the interpretation of the document, to archaeology, 'the intrinsic description of the monument' (pp. 6-7). The positive character of Foucault's archaeological approach is explained by Ian Hunter, David Saunders and Dugald Williamson (1993) in their preface to their book on pornography, where they set out the methodological shift their book is situated within. I quote this at length because it captures precisely the positions of the two critiques I have reviewed and the archaeological approach in which the rest of this thesis is situated:

Our central reorientation of existing scholarship, [...] lies in the *positive* character of our descriptions of pornography and its regulation. 'Positive' does not mean 'approving'. It refers to our attempt to describe the object in its own terms, as the autonomous product of irreducible historical conditions. By contrast, pornography has to date been analysed in a largely negative manner, that is, as a by-product of history, a

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<sup>7</sup>The difference between the history of ideas and Foucault's archaeological method is discussed in Foucault, 1972, pp. 135-140.



phenomenon possessed only of half-existence and that due solely to the malfunctioning of more fundamental forces and mechanisms. Psychologists have treated it as a perversion of the primary drives, a failed sublimation brought about by a too-rigorous application of norms and laws. For cultural historians pornography originates in periods of repression which, in refusing the social expression of desire, drive it underground where it assumes mutant forms. And for their part literary critics treat pornography as the product of the aesthetic failure to mediate fantasy and real experience, the sensuous and the moral - a failure manifest in the obsessive detail of pornographic description accompanied by skeletal plots and characters.

In departing from these well-worn accounts we shall investigate pornography as a historically specific practice, not as a distortion of 'man's' timeless erotic being. This practice did not originate from a predictable collision of the drives with society's norms and laws. Rather it emerged unforeseen from the unplanned intersections of a series of historical forces. (p. x)

Brian Winston's (1993) study of the emergence of the camera within scientific discourse, discussed at the end of the previous chapter, and the account of the picturesque offered above, both attempt to work within the kind of account suggested here. For instance, the ideal landscape should not be understood as an aesthetic failure to represent the harsh reality of rural life and the inequalities of rural economy, but as a distinct aesthetic practice regulated by norms of composition that emerged at a specific historical period; the ideal landscape is itself one of the discrete historical forces that produced the picturesque, a particular way of seeing the landscape according to a rigid set of principles.

Finally, we must conclude that by extension, neither the critique of documentary nor the critique of the representation of Scotland should be understood as theoretical mistakes, but as the products of a complex academic and cultural history of which this thesis is itself a part. In examining the Films of Scotland Documentaries, the remainder of this thesis will attempt to describe the representation of Scotland within these documentaries as a historically specific practice, and the shifting historical circumstances in which that practice emerged.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The National Interest: Institutional Formations of Films of Scotland**

In the previous chapters I have suggested, following Foucault (1972), that a theoretical and methodological shift has taken place in the study of the media. This shift is understood as a modification of the status of the document. The primary task is now not to validate the document, to establish whether it is telling the truth, 'but to work on it from within and to develop it' (pp. 6-7). Our task is to look at the documentary not as a text, but as a practice that emerged in a specific historical period, and to trace the diverse cultural formations from which it was formed.

When the Films of Scotland documentaries produce knowledge about Scotland, their production of that knowledge seems familiar and uncontroversial. The documentaries appear to talk about Scotland according to no more than the dictates of common-sense. But knowledge is neither natural nor general, it is historical and particular. There have been, and there probably will be, other ways of talking about the nation.<sup>1</sup> When the documentaries talk about Scotland, they produce particular kinds of knowledge, and it is with the problem of identifying and characterising this knowledge that the rest of this thesis is concerned.

#### **Archaeology and Discourse**

A conceptual framework for approaching this problem is mapped out in Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, using the central concept of the 'discursive formation'. Cousins and Hussain (1984), amongst others, have been careful to distinguish Foucault's notion of discourse from the use of the term 'discourse' within the social sciences; socio-linguistics, the linguistics of subjectivity, theories of ideology and semantics, and philosophies of epistemological knowledge. They argue that Foucault's use of the term discourse or discursive formation is 'tactical': 'It may be thought of as an attempt to avoid treating knowledges in terms of ideas [...] His analysis of what makes us knowledges is *not*

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<sup>1</sup>I am drawing here on Foucault's (1973, p. 3) opening observations on the human body and the anatomical atlas.



reducible to propositions which appear in meaningful sentences and which have been produced by subjects' (pp. 78-9). Foucault's notion of a discursive formation will be discussed in detail as analysis proceeds, but it may be useful to provide a brief summary here. For Foucault, as we have seen, there is no such thing as general knowledge, only particular knowledges, corpuses of systematically dispersed statements which he calls discursive formations. These statements relate to four levels: the existence of objects, modes of statement, concepts and thematic choices, each of which entail restrictions on each other and which are governed by the discourse's own 'rules of formation'. Finally, these knowledges always exist in relation to an institution which operates on, and is a part of, that knowledge.

A cultural history informed by Foucault's notion of discourse is not therefore an act of interpretation, it is not an attempt to write a history of the referent. We shall not be attempting to find out what Scotland consists of, its sociology, history, economics or politics, or who can be described as a Scot at a particular period, or what their 'Scottishness' consists of. We are not trying to reconstitute what Scotland or Scottish identity might be. While such a description may be possible, we are not concerned with reaching what Foucault might call the 'silent anterior' of Scotland, but in documenting the complexity of discursive and nondiscursive relations that govern the production of Scotland as an object of knowledge.

For two sets of commentators on Foucault's work, Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982), and Best and Kellner (1991), the fundamental problem with his archaeological method is its manifestation of 'the illusion of autonomous discourse', and the subsequent privileging of discourse over institutions and practices (Best & Kellner, p. 69). Foucault's position with regard to this is, both sets of writers argue, ultimately implausible, and this is again signalled by Foucault's own subsequent shift in emphasis. Dreyfus and Rabinow usefully summarise the key problems in Foucault's method as follows:

First, the causal power attributed to the rules governing discursive systems is unintelligible and makes the kind of influence the social institutions have - an influence which has always been at the centre of Foucault's concerns - incomprehensible. Second, insofar as Foucault takes archaeology to be an end in itself

he forecloses the possibility of bringing his critical analyses to bear on his social concerns. (p. xx)

However, Dreyfus and Rabinow point out that Foucault's later work does not abandon the technique of archaeology outright, and that he is right not to do so, rather it becomes part of his analytical tool kit in a slightly revised form. Now its purpose is not to 'work out a theory of rule-governed systems of discursive practices' but to enable Foucault not only to isolate and distinguish discursive formations but also 'to raise the genealogical questions: How are these discourses used? What role do they play in society?' (p. xxi). In order to be able to ask such questions, a change in emphasis in the archaeological method has to take place. In brief, this is a new and sustained concern with the previously theoretically marginalised fourth level of discourse; the formation of strategies and thematic choices. Dreyfus and Rabinow argue that while, as Foucault acknowledges, the formation of strategies took a back seat in his earlier works, this level becomes central in his later work: 'They will no longer be restricted to theoretical options, but will be shown as truly the element which sustains discursive activity. When the character and role of strategies is thus broadened and made basic the question of the relative influence of the discursive practices vis-à-vis the nondiscursive practices is finally thematized' (p. 78).

In other words, the Foucault of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* proposes a model of discourse where 'discourse has some sort of priority which enables it to "use" nondiscursive relations' (p. 67), such as political, economic, and institutional practices, but the later Foucault operates a model of discourse in which discourse *articulates* with these nondiscursive practices; that is, 'the unique way discourse is both dependent upon and yet feeds back and influences the nondiscursive practices it serves' (Dreyfus & Rabinow, p. 67). This and subsequent chapters operate within this revised version of archaeology in order to ask precisely these sorts of questions of the Films of Scotland documentaries; not in order to argue that the documentaries operate some sort of cultural distortion, but to examine them as historically specific practices.

This chapter explores the immediate nondiscursive practices which articulate with the Films of Scotland Committee and its documentaries. It maps out the space of early



Scottish film culture and its relation to that of the Films of Scotland Committee, offers a brief overview of the Committee's production, and examines the relation of the Committee's work to the institutional context of the State. The next chapter offers a close detailed analysis of one of the early documentaries produced by the Committee, in order to discover the identity of the discursive regimes on which it draws. One of the key functions of these chapters then is to provide much of the empirical base for the various arguments that follow in the later chapters.

Before we can begin we need to be clear about one particular aspect of our own critical discourse, that is, the way in which we conceive our own object of study, the Films of Scotland documentaries. What sort of *oeuvre* are we constructing when we refer to them in this way? Foucault (1972) has argued of the *oeuvre* that 'it is apparent that such a unity, far from being given immediately, is the result of an operation; that this operation is interpretative (since it deciphers, in the text, the transcription of something that it both conceals and manifests), [...] the establishment of a complete *oeuvre* presupposes a number of choices that are difficult to justify or even to formulate' (p. 24). Similarly, we started with Annette Kuhn's observation that the construction of the *oeuvre* of the British documentary movement excluded particular films through the use of the criteria of realism. We need to be aware of the danger then of turning the Films of Scotland documentaries into an exclusive *oeuvre*. When we use the term 'the Films of Scotland documentaries' then we are doing so not to designate a homogeneous collection of texts unified under a proper name, but to simply indicate those documentaries produced by the Films of Scotland Committee as a dispersion of films sharing a common producer. In particular, the term Films of Scotland (FoS) will be used to refer to both the documentaries themselves and the committee as an institution.

The main sources for material in this chapter are the Grierson Archive, the Scottish Film Archive, and the Scottish Central Film and Video Library (now defunct).<sup>2</sup> Between them, these last two institutions held virtually all the surviving non-fiction films produced in

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<sup>2</sup>The Scottish Central Film and Video Library was closed in 1995, transferring its films to the Scottish Film Archive.

Scotland since 1897. The Scottish Film Archive holds over 7000 titles, comprising documentary film, newsreels, shorts, advertising and promotional films, amateur and professional productions, television news material, current affairs and educational programmes. It also holds a wide range of written and graphic materials concerned with the development of Scottish cinema and television. The Scottish Central Film and Video Library's collection dated from the 1950s, and was dominated by the films produced by the Films of Scotland Committee. In the library's 1990 catalogue, *Scotland on Film and Video*, ninety two of the two hundred and nine films advertised were produced by FoS. Thirty one FoS titles are held by the Scottish Film Archive, making a total of one hundred and twenty three FoS documentaries available for research.

## **PART ONE: THE FILMS OF SCOTLAND COMMITTEE**

### **Scottish Film Culture Before 1938**

The first Films of Scotland Committee was set up in 1938. In a BBC radio programme broadcast the same year, John Grierson (1938, March 31) traced the history of the Films of Scotland Committee to a speech he made in Stirling in 1937 that was taken up by the newspapers, and to the Scottish Film Council's attempt to establish a Scottish film movement. Earlier in the programme Grierson announced; 'This year Scottish pictures are being made under proper Scottish auspices and for the first time' (p. 2). This was not in fact the case. Scottish pictures were being made under 'proper Scottish auspices' as early as the turn of the century.

Moving pictures were shown for the first time in Scotland exactly one hundred years ago on 13th April 1896, in the Empire Palace Theatre, Edinburgh, then on 26th May at the Skating Palace in Glasgow. Arguably the first Scottish film, *The Departure of the Columba from Rothesay Pier* (1896), was screened at the Skating Palace in the same year. *The Bailie* (1896, May 27) reported that 'Nothing could be finer than the representation of the Gordon Highlanders leaving Maryhill Barracks. The picture lasts several minutes, and was repeatedly applauded, as the swinging gate of the Highlanders stirred the patriotism of the audience'. In the same year George Green, a travelling showman, brought moving



pictures to Scotland as one of his fairground amusements, screening the films during the Christmas Carnival at Vinegar Hill Show Ground, east of Glasgow Cross (McBain, 1986a). Scottish showmen also shot and screened local scenes to draw an audience for their moving pictures. This gimmick was picked up by early cinema exhibitors who made short home made news reels:

These local topicals, often shot by a projectionist or a manager of a cinema, would record an event of some standing in the local community, one that would be likely to draw a big crowd. Popular subjects were gala days, sports meetings, a work's outing or the unveiling of a war memorial. The camera-man would be instructed to get as many shots as possible of the faces in the crowd and close-ups of the participants. A few nights later, and with a storm of publicity, it would be announced that this film, specially taken for that particular picture house, would be shown for the next three nights. (McBain, 1986b, p. 46)

In the late 1890s these local topicals toured various regions of Scotland on circuits that extended up into the Shetlands. One of the exhibitors was William Walker, whose coverage of the 1898 Braemar Gathering was the first film seen by Queen Victoria. It was screened at a Royal Command performance at Balmoral on 28 October 1898. From 1910 Scottish cinematographers began to make short promotional films. These included *The Making of a Great Daily Newspaper* (1911), produced by D.C. Thomson in Dundee to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the *Courier* as a daily paper, and *From Wool to Wearer - The Romance of Pesco Underwear* (1913), a film about the manufacture of gentlemen's hosiery commissioned by Peter Scott and Company of Hawick. From 1914 small production companies, such as Paul Robello's Topical Productions were set up. 'Local topicals' became increasingly popular, and in 1918 George Green's family began exhibiting regular issues of their *Scottish Moving Picture News*, later becoming *British Moving Picture News* (McBain, 1986b).

From the end of the 1920s a number of production companies were formed to produce commissioned promotional films. In 1928 Scottish Film Productions, later becoming Russell Productions then Thames and Clyde Film Company, was established by Stanley Russell and Malcom Irvine in Glasgow, and in 1930 Campbell Harper films was founded in Edinburgh by Alan Harper (McBain, 1986b). Two other companies specialised in instructional and educational film; Zest Films, set up by Graham Thompson, and Elder

Delrimple Films. Delrimple and Jimmy Gillespie filmed their trip from Cape Town to Cairo and screened it to school children in the Gorbals who, as a consequence, probably saw their first camel before they had seen their first cow; an early example of the way in which the mass media, contributed to the experience of the 'shrinking' or compression of space that began in the mid-nineteenth century and that theorists have argued is a formative feature of modernity (cf. Harvey, 1995).

During the same period Scottish film culture became increasingly consolidated at an institutional level with the creation of film societies, guilds and libraries. In 1929 the Film Society of Glasgow was founded, followed in 1930 by the Edinburgh Film Guild and the Scottish Educational Cinema Society, established in the west of Scotland for the production, study and presentation of educational films. In 1931 Glasgow Co-operative Film Library was set up, and in 1933 Glasgow mounted Britain's first amateur film festival. The festival grew out of the Meteor Film Producing Society, and became the cutting edge of amateur film making with prize-winners such as Norman McLaren, Stuart McAllistair and Eddie McConnell quickly moving into professional production, including work for FoS. In 1934 the Federation of Scottish Filmmakers Society was formed, in 1935 the Scottish Educational Cinema Society merged with the SESSA to become the Scottish Educational Film Association, and in 1936 the Scottish Federation of Film Societies was founded. Scottish film culture was given further institutional consolidation by the state when Scottish Film Council was established in Glasgow in June 1934 with the approval of the recently formed British Film Institute. The Council, which had four panels; entertainment, education, social service and amateur cinematography, established the Scottish Film Office in 1938. Up until 1938 then, Scottish film culture may be characterised by three key features; Scottish film production is almost exclusively non-fictional,<sup>3</sup> specialising in promotional or educational documentaries, it is supported by a strong network of film societies, festivals and libraries, and it is becoming increasingly centralised in its organisation, a centralisation partly engineered by the State. When the

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<sup>3</sup>Limited feature film production did take place in Scotland in the first half of the century, although few companies survived more than one production and the majority of the films that were produced are now missing (cf. McBain, 1996).



first Films of Scotland Committee was set up in 1938, these three features were distilled in its organisation and remit.

### **The First Films of Scotland Committee, 1938-1943**

The first Films of Scotland Committee was set up by the Scottish Secretary of State and the Scottish Development Council with the stated object of fostering and encouraging the production of Scottish films of national interest. The first seven films the Committee produced were primarily for the 1938 Glasgow Empire Exhibition. The most comprehensive surviving documentation on the institutional formation and philosophy of the First Committee is a script for a BBC radio programme Grierson participated in in 1938. As Grierson (1938) put it in the broadcast; 'Here is a prospect of all sorts of people being specially interested in Scotland in 1938 and a chance to focus their interest in the life and achievement of our country. What medium can do it better than film?' (p. 5). The Committee was appointed by the Scottish Development Council in consultation with Walter Elliot, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Permanent Under Secretary of State, Sir Horace Hamilton, for an initial three year period. In his broadcast, Grierson noted that Walter Elliot, then Under Secretary of State for Scotland, had played an active role in the development of the Empire Marketing Board's use of film. The Chairman of the Committee was Gilbert Archer, and Grierson acted as production advisor as part of the service offered by his Film Centre (also set up in 1938). Other members of the Committee included Sir Alexander King, later to become the chairman of the second Films of Scotland Committee, Neil Gunn and O. H. Mavor (alias James Bridie). Finance was limited, with most of the money coming from other government QUANGOS such as the Commissioner for Special Areas, the National Fitness Council and the British Council for Cultural Relations Overseas. In his radio talk Grierson expressed surprise that apart from £5,000 contributed by the Glasgow industrialist Sir John MacTaggart, industrial companies were less forthcoming than the civil service. As we shall see, this was to change significantly with the formation of the second committee, and begins to suggest that despite their institutional similarities, the two committees played a fundamentally different role.

The seven films the Committee produced for the Empire Exhibition were *Wealth of a Nation* (1938), on Scottish industry and town planning; *The Face of Scotland* (1938), a broad history of Scotland and the Scottish 'character'; *They Made the Land* (1938), a history of Scottish agriculture; *The Children's Story* (1938), on Scottish education; *Sea Food* (1938); *Scotland for Fitness* (1938); and *Sport in Scotland* (1938). The documentaries were not only produced for the exhibition. In his radio talk Grierson noted that 'We want to see these pictures of Scotland all over the country, so that Scotsmen themselves might learn a little more of what was happening under the surface of national life' (p. 5). He also talked about sending them 'across the border' and 'overseas to the Empire and the world' (p. 6). In fact, the intention had also been to screen the documentaries at the 1939 New York World Fair, but the British Council refused to allow them to be shown on the grounds that they failed to present 'a sufficiently ceremonial or picturesque presentation of life in Britain' (Forsyth Hardy quoted in Caughie & McArthur, 1982, p. 75). Nevertheless, Grierson managed to get the films screened in an American social science pavilion. Hardy (1990), director of the second Committee for nineteen years (1955-1974), notes that the first seven Films of Scotland documentaries had 4,725 showings in British cinemas, and estimates the total audience at 22,491,000 (p. 235).

Documentation concerning the efforts of the second Films of Scotland Committee to trace the whereabouts of these documentaries in the mid-1950s, gives some idea of the details of this distribution. A letter written in 1955 in reply to their inquiries from the Scottish Film Council states that *They Made the Land* was still in circulation, and that *The Face of Scotland* had been recently withdrawn and was now on the shelves. They had no copies of the other films. The 35mm negatives of the entire 1938 collection were finally traced through the Imperial War Museum to the Central Office of Information, who returned them in 1957, although an eighth film made in 1938, *Dundee*, was not among them and was not unearthed until the end of the decade (Scottish Council, 1961, September 1). The recovery of the films was a matter of some urgency given that both BBC Scotland and Scottish Television had requested the use of extracts from a number of the documentaries. Further, a letter from the Commonwealth Relations Office (1957, May 8) to the Committee states that



'the Crown Agents have been requested to purchase a 16mm print of *They Made the Land* [...] for presentation to the Government of Thailand under the Technical Co-operation scheme of the Colombo plan'.

Grierson (1938) argued that the Committee had its sights set beyond these seven films; 'We are not thinking of just making a spurt in the year of the Exhibition. We have set ourselves to the task of seeing that Scotland is henceforward as adequately represented on the screen as our national means will allow' (p. 8). But before the war broke out, the Committee were successful in producing only one other film, the history of which is instructive because it pre-empted the political economy and production of the second FoS Committee.

The Dundee Chamber of Commerce Yearbook (1938) charts the Committee's attempt to persuade the Chamber to sponsor a twenty minute film 'of the Tay Valley, culminating in Dundee and its industries' (p. 95). The Committee offered to produce and distribute the film if Dundee Chamber of Commerce came up with the cash. A letter to the Town Clerk of Dundee dated March 27 from John Graham, the secretary of the Films of Scotland Committee stated that the Committee had 'always had in mind the production of films portraying the various important Scottish areas, and for this purpose they hope to enlist the support of civic authorities, industrial and other interests' (p. 114). Dundee was the first Local Authority to be approached in connection with the production of a film of its respective area, but it refused to do anything until similar steps had been taken by Glasgow and Edinburgh. By June of that year the Committee had already received contributions towards the film amounting in aggregate to £1,174 2s 0d from various other sources and production of *Dundee* (1938) went ahead.

*Dundee* is significant economically because the Committee attempted to produce it by approaching and persuading public and industrial bodies with a potential vested interest in the production of such a film to finance it themselves. The pay back for investors would be the promotion of their industry or region; a public relations exercise rather than a hard sell. As we shall see, this attempt prefigures the way in which the Second Committee financed production. *Dundee* is significant generically because it 'looks' more like the films produced

by the second Committee than the first. While principally a documentary about industrial activity on the Tay valley, and therefore not that different in subject from *Wealth of a Nation, Dundee* is structured along the lines of a travelogue; narrative and travel organise its production of knowledge about Tayside. It could be argued then that the documentary abandons the paternalist voice-of-God narration of the other 1938 documentaries for a more populist conversational approach.

### **Scottish Film Culture Between the Two Committees**

Scottish film culture continued to develop. In 1939 the Scottish Film Council established the Scottish Film Library (later to become the SCFVL), a central library of educational films that testifies to the almost exclusively non-fictional nature of Scottish film production. In that same year, as Andrew Ferns (1985) has documented, the Ministry of Information, planned in 1935 and partially mobilised in 1938, became fully operational. While its headquarters were in London, Forsyth Hardy, later to chair the second Films of Scotland Committee, organised its Scottish Regional Office at the Scottish Office. In the first months of the war, in conjunction with the SFC and the SEFA, the office ran the Evacuation Film Scheme, using film library resources to maintain a number of travelling film units. Essentially an improvisation, throughout the winter of 1939-40 this scheme operated in the rural areas of Scotland, in the three months of its operation giving some 1500 shows to an audience of over 150,000.

In September 1940 the Ministry of Information's Non-theatrical Film Scheme was formed. This served two functions; the organisation of special shows of films of a social, as distinct from an educational character; and the production of documentary films:

When started, the idea was to present shows of films depicting the war effort to voluntary organisations throughout the countryside, but this conception was soon found to be too narrow, and before long the idea of the film shows had changed. Significant war time audiences were found in the Canteen Audience of the factory, among Civil Defence workers and in the remote rural areas. [...] For all these audiences special techniques and special films were evolved: so that the units were not only showing films of war interest, but were also assisting in training these audiences in special skills essential to their war work or illustrating problems of a social character which were likely to be of significance to their lives. (Boyle, 1946, pp. 65-6)



When the FoS Committee had been appointed it was with the understanding that, as a letter from the Thomas Johnston (1943, November 17) at the Scottish Office put it, 'if at any time it became impracticable to continue the production and circulation of Scottish films of national interest, the funds and the films held by the Committee should be at the disposal of the Secretary of State'. With the outbreak of war no new films were produced by the Committee, and its operations were held in suspense. Given that the Ministry of Information and the British Council were now producing films themselves, and that labour and materials were growing increasingly scarce, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Scottish Development Council agreed in November 1943 'to terminate the existing arrangements and to make interim provision for the disposal of the funds and films' (Johnston, 1943). A small body of Trustees, subject to the directions of the Secretary of State was appointed and made responsible for this task. On behalf of the Trustees the Scottish Home Department placed the printing material for the original Films of Scotland productions in the care of the Government Cinematograph Adviser, who in turn placed them in the Central Office of Information. The immediate post-war years however saw Scottish film culture continue to flourish, with the arrival of the First Edinburgh International Film Festival in 1947 organised by the Film Guild and chaired by Norman Wilson. It also saw the end of any form of government financed filmmaking in 1952 (Hardy, 1990, p. 101).

### **The Second Films of Scotland Committee, 1955-1982**

The Second Films of Scotland Committee, set up by the Secretary of State for Scotland acting through the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) began active operations in February 1955, with the appointment of a director, Forsyth Hardy, the first film critic of *The Scotsman* and an associate of Grierson (who also accepted an invitation to join the Committee) (Grant, 1964, October 29, p. 1). Chairman of the Committee was Sir Alexander B. King, an independent cinema exhibitor. Other members of the Committee, all of whom acted in a voluntary capacity, were drawn from local and national public administration, industry, tourism, and later the Arts. Not surprisingly, the professional membership of the Committee is reflected in the subject matter of the films themselves. In



an early memorandum the purposes for which the Committee had been established are laid out:

- a. To promote, stimulate and encourage the production of Scottish films of national interest.
- b. To administer funds for the production and promotion of such films.
- c. To act as an Advisory Centre for the production and circulation of films of/or concerning Scotland.
- d. To commission the production of films for any form of circulation and to make arrangements for their display in public. (To educate people at home and abroad in regard to Scotland.) (Films of Scotland, 1955)

Again, apart from the 'gift' of £10,000 from the Minister of State at the Scottish Office, the Committee financed production by attracting sponsors from industry, local authorities, and national organisations to finance individual films. By 1960, twenty films had been completed and according to a press release they represented 'a total expenditure of approximately £90,000' (Films of Scotland, 1960, February, 19, p. 1). Forsyth Hardy, interviewed in 1982 by John Caughie and Colin McArthur (1982), claims that the sponsor's influence on the representation of Scotland in the films was minimal compared to that of the filmmakers and the Committee itself:

We believed that if we could get the commissions to make films on such subjects as shipbuilding or tweed or carpet-making or agriculture and so on, we could then give the films a bigger horizon or wider sweep, a deeper significance. If we could bring these qualities to the films, then we would be satisfying our own requirement, which was to project the life and character of Scotland, although we had to accept that we were making a film about an industry or an activity or something else like that. We had therefore to satisfy the sponsor as well as do our own thing. But always there was that narrow way of proceeding, of keeping the balance between what you call the national purpose and the satisfaction of the producer. (Hardy qtd. in Caughie & McArthur, p. 90)

The documentaries were therefore produced within a double constraint; the interests of the sponsors, who would be unlikely to brook any criticism of their work in the documentaries they were funding, and the institutional aims of the Committee itself, particularly its 'national purpose'. We shall return to this national purpose later. At this point I want to note that there is often a straightforward correlation between sponsoring body and the subject of the documentary they sponsor. For instance, William Grant & Sons financed *The Water of Life* (1972), a history of their Glenfiddich distillery, while the distillers Long John financed, *The Spirit of Scotland*, a documentary on whisky distilling at Laphroaig and



Tormore; *Gardens by the Sea* (1972), an account of the sub-tropical gardens on the west coast of Scotland was financed by the Scottish Tourist Board and the National Trust for Scotland; the County Council of Renfrew financed *A Place in the Country* (1972), an informational film on Renfrew Country Park; the Department of Environmental Improvement and the City of Glasgow District Council financed *Places or People: Environmental Improvement in Glasgow* (1975); the travelogues *Aberdeen - By Seaside and Deeside* (1971), *A Town Called Ayr* (1975), and *Highland Capital* (1968) were financed by the Corporation of City of Aberdeen, the Royal Burgh of Ayr, and the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourist Association respectively; finally, the Scottish Arts Council financed *Macintosh* (1968), a documentary on the Glaswegian architect and designer, and *Norman MacCaig: A Man in my Position* (1977); with the British Council they financed *Three Scottish Painters* (1963). As the Committee (1962, February) put it: 'Films have been separately financed by the interest being served - industry, local authority or national body' (p. 1). In other words, in the majority of cases these documentaries are little more than promotional films or extended advertisements. The only real oddity is the financing by the three main Scottish banks and the British Linen Bank of *Sir Walter Scott: The Practical Romantic* (1969), a film made to celebrate the bi-centenary of Scott's birth. Although it could be argued that this was only fair, given that Scott's considerable contribution to the nation's mimetic capital was also by implication an equally considerable financial contribution.<sup>4</sup>

## Production

Up until the mid 1960s, the Committee's rate of production of documentaries was fairly low, averaging around three a year. In 1964 there was a rise to five documentaries a year, followed by a further sharp rise in 1970, peaking at ten documentaries produced in 1972 alone. Production is steady for the next few years but drops rapidly off to its pre-1965 figure at the end of the seventies. In April 1982 the Films of Scotland Committee was

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<sup>4</sup> Alternatively, it might be suggested that the film is in some way an expression of gratitude to Scott for his defence, in 1826, of the right of the Scottish banks to print their own bank notes (cf. Buchan, 1931, pp. 292-295).

devolved, and the films were transferred to the Scottish Council of Educational Technology who continued to distribute them through the SCFVL until 1995.

The Committee's press releases and reports divide the films into three groups: Tourist Films, Industrial Films, and Films of Various Aspects of National Life. Tourist films, or travelogues, make up 46% of the Committee's total output. They range in scope from covering a single town in a film such as *Dunfermline* (1974), or a single island in films like *The Isle of Rhum* (1970), to covering a collection of islands such as the Hebrides in *Enchanted Isles* (1957), an entire region in a film such as *Perthshire Panorama* (1959), or, more rarely, the whole country in films like *Busman's Holiday* (1959). The travelogues are discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

Industrial films, which include films on public services, make up 28% of the Committee's production. An article distributed by the Committee (1959) entitled 'Films for Industry' stated that:

One of the principal aims in setting up the Committee was to provide a service to industrialists who have a story of achievement to tell or have goods to sell in the world market. In comparison with the rest of Britain, the number of films made in Scotland on industrial themes is so small as to produce an imbalance in the projection of British industrial effort [...] An opportunity is being lost by industry in Scotland. It is being lost because Scottish industrialists are not making adequate use of the knowledgeable and experienced body available to assist them in employing the film to the best advantage. The Committee offers an assurance that a project will be carefully supervised from the conception of the basic idea through all the stages of production to the completion of the film.

The Committee's Industrial Films, a category which also covers films on social planning and welfare, includes documentaries such as *The Big Mill* (1963), an account of the steel mills at Gartcosh and Ravenscraig; *Cruachan* (1966), a description of the engineering work involved in building the hydro-electric scheme at Ben Cruachan; *If Only we had the Space* (1974), an account of the modernisation of some of Glasgow's tenements; and *Water, Water, Everywhere* (1967), a look at Scotland's water surplus in relation to the rest of the world's water shortage problems. As even this small sample indicates, this part of the Committee's production activities have much in common with the work of the GPO film unit in the 1930s and films such as *Industrial Britain* (1931), *Housing Problems* (1935),



*Coalface* (1935), and *Night Mail* (1936).

Films on Various Aspects of National Life make up 15% of the Committee's production. This category receives little comment in the Committee's various public papers, as a certain nervousness surrounds the subject of national imagery. Speaking at a press screening of *From Glasgow Green to Bendigo* (1958), a documentary on carpet manufacturing in Glasgow, Sir Alexander King (1958, November 27), echoing Grierson's words in 1938, commented: 'I have nothing against the kilt, the caber, or the bag-pipe. In their own way they are all admirable [...] but as symbols of a country in a workaday world they are not enough', although he admitted that 'as a Committee we have made several films which pay their tribute to these national symbols' (p. 1). Similarly at a News Conference four years later Sir Alexander (1962, November 21) repeated this anxiety: 'When the Committee was set up by the Secretary of State he asked us to project Scotland on the screens of the world. He was anxious that a balanced and authentic picture of Scotland should be in circulation to offset the caricature which is so often passed off for our country' (p. 1). In place of the invented traditions of national pastimes and national costume the documentaries in this section, with the exception of a film like *Scotland Dances* (1957), are primarily biographies of Scottish artists, writers, designers, photographers, musicians, and architects. The films in this section include *The Hand of Adam* (1975) a tour of the architectural works of Robert Adam; *Hugh MacDiarmid: No Fellow Travellers* (1972), a conversation between the poet, his son, and Norman MacCaig, and a discussion of his work by other poets in Edinburgh's Milne's bar; and *The Sun Pictures* (1965), an account of mid-nineteenth century photographers David Hill and Robert Adamson. The remaining miscellaneous documentaries include a number of wildlife films and the Committee's only feature film, *The Duna Bull* (1973).

### **Distribution and Exhibition**

The Committee (1959, May 5) was able to claim that 'the films which the Committee helps industrialists to produce are not allowed to gather dust on a shelf in the office' (p. 1). Domestic exhibition was enabled by Sir Alexander King's connections as a cinema

exhibitor. A sample of the documentaries distribution details illustrates the strength of this influence, and the Committee's general ability to get their films wide circulation: in 1959 *Perthshire Panorama* was released at the Odeon, Leicester Square with *Ask Any Girl*, and was exhibited throughout the country with *North by North-West*; in 1963 *The Big Mill*, distributed by MGM, was screened at the Cosmo, Glasgow with Bergman's *The Silence*; in 1968 *Hebridean Highway* had a London West End run with *The Mercenaries*, and began its ABC circuit release with *The Comedians*; in 1973 *The Erskine Bridge* was distributed with *Jesus Christ Superstar*; and in 1981 *Castle and Capital* premiered and was distributed with Woody Allen's *Stardust Memories*. Occasionally, the films also received television coverage; in 1962 for instance, extracts from *The Heart of Scotland* (1962), a film on Stirling and Stirlingshire that Grierson provided the treatment for, were screened on Scottish Television's *Here and Now* on March 5 and the BBC's *Compass* on March 7; a month later *Seawards the Great Ships* (1960), another Grierson treatment on Clyde shipbuilding, received considerable television coverage when it received an Oscar for best documentary.

For most of their life then, the films were primarily 'quota quickies', screened to satisfy the statutory home-product requirement enforced on cinema exhibitors in 1927 by the Cinematograph Films Act (Hartog, 1983). Peculiarly perhaps for quota quickies, they also found their own audience, drawn to screenings where FoS films were shown exclusively. These were the annual "Scotland on the Screen" events organised by the Committee, usually taking the form of a compilation of six or seven FoS films and a speech by one of the Committee members, the first of which was held in 1957 at the Regal Cinema in Edinburgh during the International Festival. From 1958 these events were held annually in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and at the Royal Festival Hall in London (Films of Scotland, 1960, February 19, p. 5).

The films also reached a large international audience, partly because their overseas distribution was guaranteed by the Government's Overseas Film Service. Further, a number of the films were distributed in different language versions by British Information Services, the British Council and the British Travel and Holidays Association. In 1958, six



FoS documentaries were screened in the British Industries Pavilion Cinema at the Brussels' International Exhibition. In 1959 a scheme of Commonwealth performances was set up, with annual screenings in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. In 1960 and 1962 coast-to-coast screenings of the films were carried out in Canada. All of these activities were what the Committee referred to as 'the overseas projection of Scottish life and achievement' (Films of Scotland, 1960, September 28, p. 2).

## **PART TWO: INSTITUTIONAL FORMATIONS**

### **QUANGOS and Public Culture**

Institutionally, what is clear about both Films of Scotland Committees was that they existed at only an arm's reach from the state, in other words they were QUANGOS. They were initially set up, funded and appointed by central government, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Scottish Development Council to supervise and develop activity in areas of public interest. Thus despite the fact that the press releases of the second Committee usually flag up the fact that the Committee is privately financed and is not the recipient of a government grant, the second Committee was started up with a 'gift' of £10,000 from the Minister of State at the Scottish Office, Sir Hugh Fraser (Films of Scotland, 1960, February 19, p. 1), by strange coincidence the Committee's Honorary Treasurer. Similarly, while membership of the Committee was voluntary, almost half of the Committee in 1962 had either a CBE, an OBE, or an MBE, and alongside Sir Hugh Fraser were his colleagues from the Scottish Information Office, the Scottish Home Department, and the Scottish Council (Development and Industry).<sup>5</sup>

But why would the Scottish Office want to create a QUANGO devoted to the production of documentary film, a QUANGO that basically acted as a public relations department for Scottish industrialists, the tourist industry, and various other QUANGOS? I want to argue that there are a number of things at stake in the state's economic and administrative investment in Scottish documentary production, and that as institutions, both FoS

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<sup>5</sup>Although the Committee's QUANGO status was similar to that of the British documentary movement, there were significant differences in terms of their sponsorship and their production arrangements.

Committees fit neatly into the history of public cultural policy in Britain since at least the mid nineteenth century.

Prior to the mid-nineteenth century the majority of European fine art celebrated wealth as a symbol of a divine or social order, and this is reflected by both the patronage of artists by the religious hierarchy or aristocracy, and the audience for artistic works, the religious community and the aristocrat's peers (Berger, 1972). Nicholas Pearson (1982) argues that with the foundation of the Royal Academy in 1768, the first British cultural QUANGO, state involvement began to shape both the nature and the practice of the arts as part of a *public* culture, where the culture of the arts became bound up with new forms of morality and spiritual values (pp. 1-47). Pearson argues that the State's desire to patronise the Arts was part of an effort to shape public taste, knowledge and education. This ideology was given its own physical institution with the establishment of the National Gallery in 1824, the first art gallery in Britain open to the general public, complete with special opening times for the working classes along with instructions on how to dress and behave.

Tony Bennett (1988) argues that State intervention in the Arts was part of a more general phenomenon which included the Great Exhibition of 1851, and the opening of the South Kensington Museum in 1857. This phenomenon, 'the exhibitionary complex', developed from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century and involved 'the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains in which they had been previously displayed (but to a restricted public) into progressively more open and public arenas' (p. 74). In the Scottish context, this shift is exemplified by the history of what is now known as the National Museums of Scotland. The National Museums of Scotland was the product of the 1985 National Heritage (Scotland) Act, which amalgamated two existing museums; the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland and the Royal Scottish Museum. The National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland was set up in 1780 to house two private antiquarian collections. In 1826 the state provided the society with an exhibition space in the art gallery at the foot of the Mound in Edinburgh, later moving the collection to its current location on Queen Street. The Great Exhibition of 1851 financed the formation of the Department of Science & Art which in turn set up the Industrial Museum of Scotland



(later called the Royal Scottish Museum) in 1854, in order to encourage 'the Progress of the Useful Arts'. In the 1860s the museum amalgamated with the Natural History Museum and Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, which again was largely composed of hitherto private mineral, zoological, and botanical collections and specimens (Anderson, 1989). Like Pearson, Bennett argues that the State's apparently benevolent democratisation of cultural exhibition was bound up with the transformation of the public order problem into one of culture, and that museums, art galleries and national exhibitions should be understood as part of an educative and civilising cultural technology (p. 84).

Anthony Giddens (1987) has argued that surveillance is one of the central features of the modern nation-state's regulation of its (human) resources. Surveillance, for Giddens involves not only 'the accumulation of 'coded information', which can be used to administer the activities of individuals about whom it is gathered', but also 'the direct supervision of the activities of some individuals by others in positions of authority over them' (p. 14). State intervention in public culture must therefore also be understood in the context of the institutional peculiarities of the modern state itself. But Giddens' notion of surveillance needs to be modified in this context. Drawing on Foucault, Bennett argues that the ensemble of disciplines and techniques of display employed by the museum were meant to serve as object lessons in power where the public not only become subjects of knowledge but are themselves part of the spectacle, their actions disciplined by the surveillance of other members of the orderly public:

The exhibitionary complex [...] perfected a self-monitoring system of looks in which the subject and object positions can be exchanged, in which the crowd comes to commune with and regulate itself through interiorizing the ideal and ordered view of itself as seen from the controlling vision of power - a site of sight accessible to all. It was in thus democratising the eye of power that the expositions realised Bentham's aspiration for a system of looks within which the central position would be available to the public at all times [the panopticon], a model lesson in civics in which a public regulated itself through self-observation. (p. 82)

This was exactly the institutional environment that the first FoS documentaries were produced to be screened in; the Glasgow Empire Exhibition of 1938, an exhibitionary space in which, like the Great Exhibition of 1851, the whole world, past and present, became metonymically displayed for a self-regulating public gaze. My central argument is



that nineteenth century state intervention in public culture opened up an institutional space in which FoS later emerged. This manifests itself at a number of levels; the formation of the Committee by the State and its institutional aims; the character of a number of the documentaries themselves; and the Committee's relationship with other State QUANGOS. For instance, it is notable that a number of FoS documentaries produced by the second Committee were funded by the Scottish Arts Council, the modern inheritor of the ideology and practices of the public arts patronage discussed by Pearson.<sup>6</sup>

More generally, the documentaries produced by both Committees were intended to balance the cinema's dominant regime of entertainment with one of education. In the documentaries produced by the first Committee, this public education was partly and explicitly concerned with transforming public cultural practice. To illustrate this I want to examine *Scotland for Fitness* (1938), produced by Gaumont British Instructional for FoS, and financed by another QUANGO, the National Fitness Council of Scotland.

(Montage of shots of Princes Street with newspaper headlines announcing formation of Fitness Council)

*Voice Over:* In the centre of Edinburgh, a couple of minutes walk from the busy traffic of Princes Street, a modern movement is being born, a national crusade for a fitter people and a healthier land. Sir Ian Colquhoun, the chairman of the Fitness Council, will tell you something of what the Council hopes you will do to get fit, and keep fit.

(Sir Ian in suit, behind desk in office, directly addresses camera)

*Sir Ian:* The National Fitness Council of Scotland, of which I am chairman, has been set the task of improving our Scottish physique, and of awakening in the minds of Scots men and women a pride in their bodily activity and an ideal of perfect physical condition. We have no compulsory powers, and we don't want them, no set programmes, no rigid ideas, we just want everyone to take the type of healthy physical exercise which most appeals to them.

(Shot of mansion by loch, fly fisherman, and hiker)

I live on Loch Lomond, my happiest hours are spent in that beautiful country amongst the people I love so well. From my earliest days it has been an unconscious habit with me to keep myself fit because it enabled me to do the things I like best.

The notion of a national body that has no compulsory powers but which nevertheless intends to regulate the physical body of the national subject illustrates Giddens' argument that the modern state is a regime of surveillance. But it also illustrates the way in which Giddens' notion of surveillance needs to take on board the modern concept of power that

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<sup>6</sup>For instance; *Three Scottish Painters* (1963); *Mackintosh* (1968); *Norman MacCaig: A Man in my Position* (1977).



Foucault has theorised and that Bennett observes in the exhibitionary complex. For Foucault, power has not disappeared, it has become more refined, appearing in new forms of domination that operate at a micro level. At the centre of this network is the human body, which is operated on not through repression, but through the discursive production of a regime of knowledge-pleasure within which it is defined (Foucault (1990, p. 107).

*Scotland for Fitness* operates within a similar regime of knowledge-pleasure. The documentary is concerned with producing a fit healthy body, not through physical coercion, but through the production of subjects who have what Sir Ian calls 'an ideal of perfect physical condition', a normative body which the public will aspire to attain. This ideal is embodied in the documentary by four figures: Sir Ian himself; Mrs Brown, organiser of the women's keep fit movement; 'Mr Barr, who's done a great deal of hiking in his time'; and Jack Gardner, centre half for Queens Park football team. The statements these four figures make about recreation reproduce certain features of the discourse of nineteenth century leisure reformists.

(Mrs Brown at keep fit class in gym)

*Mrs Brown:* In our classes we have women of all ages, and from varying walks of life, who feel the need for exercise. Our main ideal is to improve the internal health of their bodies, and with better circulation, better digestion and breathing, to get a general sense of well being. With a well thought out scheme of movement, we help our members to acquire good balance, and posture, and suppleness. Of course we do use music, and the music is carefully selected for the exercises and does a very great deal to relieve the mental tension caused by monotonous work. So I think you would be struck if you came to one of our classes by the happy atmosphere that is created by the leader, and the music, and the members themselves. Each member comes to learn how exercises should be done, and to correct faults in herself caused either by the inactivity of her life, or by the wrong kind of activity.

In distinguishing her keep fit classes from what she calls 'the wrong kind of activity', Mrs Brown reproduces the nineteenth century distinction between legitimate middle class and suspect working class leisure practices . But this is not to suggest that the invitation to keep fit is addressed to the middle class exclusively. On the contrary, the rational recreationalists advocated 'the creation of new institutions and activities [within which] the respectable of all classes could meet in harmony' (Cunningham, 1980, p. 110). Mrs Brown's keep fit sessions, enjoyed by participants 'from varying walks of life', are such an activity. Further, like the reformists the keep fit classes are concerned not only with the



physical body but also the mental one; their goal is the attainment of 'a general sense of well being'; keep fit is about posture, but it is also about the relief of mental tension.<sup>7</sup> But in what Sir Ian calls 'this new and exciting world of physical recreation' in the 1930s there is a reconfiguration of certain features of the nineteenth century discourse of leisure, illustrated by the contribution of Mr Jack Gardner

(Jack Gardener addresses camera directly, and is seen circuit training with other footballers)

*Jack Gardener:* I'm a civil engineer, and I'm working very hard from nine to five. As to my evenings, three nights a week I've got classes, so football can only be a secondary consideration to me. However, I do manage to keep fit, with two nights a week training and a Saturday's game.

Tuesday night's training usually consists of doing about eight or ten laps, alternate walk one, run one. This is for loosening up purposes and also for your breathing. After that, you do about ten or twelve short, sharp sprints of thirty to forty yards. Then into the gym, where we do exercises for stomach muscles, leg muscles, back muscles, flexibility and mobility. A hot bath and a cold spray, and you're feeling tip top.

With these two nights a week, our club is able to compete in the first division of the Scottish league, which is a very great feat indeed. We may from time to time be beaten, we may find we haven't the skill of the other side, we haven't the ball control, but one thing no one can question is our stamina. From start to finish we always are a hundred per cent fit.

Not surprisingly, the emphasis here is not on the mass leisure activity of watching football. Standing with other supporters on the terraces would have been seen by nineteenth century leisure reformists as an example of the working class aesthetic of experiential involvement, and a loss of critical self-consciousness. Not only is the film concerned with performing rather than spectating, the focus is on the physical preparation for the game rather than the game itself, on achieving the bodily ideal rather than the performance of that ideal on the pitch. This achievement is further legitimated by the use of Jack Gardner himself, 'a centre half of Queens Park'. While a Rangers or Celtic player might have been the obvious choice in terms of mass appeal, Queens Park were something of an anachronism in Scottish football, in that they were the only amateur team in the professional first division, hence Mr Gardner's statement that playing in the first division is 'a very great feat indeed'. He is first and foremost a civil engineer who attends night classes, like the rest of his team he is

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<sup>7</sup>Jon Stratton (1989) argues that 'the preoccupation of those members of the middle class concerned with working class welfare was the supply of new forms of pleasure which would be rational and, what was considered the same thing, morally uplifting' (p. 39).



an amateur Gentleman rather than a professional Player, another nineteenth century distinction that is as much social as it is economic.

What is striking about the activities featured in the film is the way in which fitness becomes associated with a rigid regimen, but a regimen quite different from that of the nineteenth century reformists. Cunningham argues that in the nineteenth century, 'it required something of a revolution for the middle class to be able to absorb physical recreation into their cultural world; and that revolution had not occurred before mid-century' (p. 100). In the film however, there is a specific emphasis on *physical* recreation, on bodily fitness, with much talk of muscles, suppleness and breathing. Further, whereas the nineteenth century reformists explicitly distinguished between legitimate and shameful leisure pursuits, *Scotland for Fitness* does not prescribe those *types* of activity which are legitimate and those which are not; the film's final sequence is a montage of a variety of recreational activities from golf and hurdling to camping and cycling. Although the film is clear that 'the wrong kind of activity' does exist, Sir Ian is explicit that keep fit, football and hill walking are just 'some of the possibilities of keeping fit in Scotland today'. We might suggest that what the film advocates are not particular activities but what Foucault (1986) calls 'circumstantial regimens' (pp. 124-5), any physical activity which is structured according to a quite specific regimen for keeping fit. The activities of Mrs Brown, Mr Gardner, and Mr Barr involve careful planning, preparation, and execution in order to ensure the correct balance in their combination of different elements: the careful selection of music, of exercises for all the muscle groups, of routes across mountains between hostels.

This highly reflexive approach to leisure again owes something to the nineteenth century reformists, who valorised the reflexive self-consciousness of middle-class practices. While this emerges in Mrs Brown's keep fit classes, its clearest articulation is in Sir Ian's interview with Mr Barr.

(Mr Barr in hiking gear sits in Sir Ian's office)

*Sir Ian:* Going anywhere this weekend?

*Mr Barr:* Yes, I was going to go up through the Argyll National Forest park.

*Sir Ian:* I know that well. Sit down.

*Mr Barr:* I'm thinking of doing this circular tour. From Argarten Youth Hostel, down Loch Long to Marc, up onto the saddle, along the hill ridge, down Coelessan, and back to Argarten.

*Sir Ian:* Well you seem to know Scotland pretty well I must say.

*Mr Barr:* Well I think I can claim to know it as well as anyone, I've been exploring it since I was twelve, on cycle and foot.

Mr Barr is no Romantic. His solitary hill walking belongs to a middle class aesthetic that is both rational and reflexive (cf. Bourdieu, 1986). His engagement with the landscape lacks the idealisation of the experience of involvement that Stratton (1989, pp. 39-42) argues lay at the heart of both the working class aesthetic and the theory of the Sublime. For Mr Barr and Sir Ian, hill walking produces rational knowledge about Scotland, not a loss of the self. Sir Ian states this explicitly: 'In this room is a map of Scotland, mountain, loch and glen, we want to get you to know that country, and what is equally important, get to know the people who dwell there, and understand their point of view'. This returns us to the point that the project the documentary is engaged in is a specifically *national* project. Not only is Sir Ian chair of a specifically national council, Mr Gardner is a national representative too, 'the leader of the Scottish eleven in many thrilling games against England, Ireland and Wales.' He is a national icon who in the documentary becomes a national physical ideal. *Scotland for Fitness* closes with the text "KEEP FIT AND RAISE THE SCOTTISH STANDARD" superimposed over a shot of rising lion rampant flag. This is state intervention into not just into public culture, but into a specifically national public culture.

### **Citizenship and the Public Sphere**

The 1938 Films of Scotland documentaries operate within a particular nexus of state, nation, and culture. Although Scotland is not a nation-state in the modern sense of the term, it is by no means a stateless nation. David McCrone (1992) argues that 'while Scotland surrendered its statehood in 1707, it retained much of the institutional apparatus of self-government' (p. 21), central to which since 1886 has been its own national, administrative apparatus, the Scottish Office. Part of the Scottish Office's responsibility is the administration of the national education system which survived the Union. The negotiation between nation, state and education is the central feature of *The Children's*



*Story* (1938), another documentary produced by the Committee:

*Voice Over:* In Scotland today, the first country in the world to have universal education, the focus of attention is the nation's 800,000 children. All over Scottish schools a revolution is taking place, teachers are discovering new ways to prepare their children for citizenship in the modern world. Down the centuries Scotland built up a great school system founded on discipline and hard work. Our people, often at great sacrifice to themselves, saw to it that every child, no matter what his creed or class had a chance of learning.

The documentary reflects Gellner's (1983) argument that one consequence of the state's 'monopoly of legitimate education' was that it produced 'fully socialised individuals' (p. 32), or as the documentary puts it, children prepared for 'citizenship in the modern world'. Citizenship involves for the subject of the state both a set of civil, political and economic rights and a corresponding set of civil, political, and economic obligations;<sup>8</sup> for instance it is both the right of access to the health authorities, educationists and child psychologists whose work the documentary introduces, and an obligation to submit to their authority. In the context of education in particular, citizenship is both a right and an obligation to know. More specially still, it is the right and obligation to know particular things. Like teaching practices, the documentary narrates how this too has taken a fundamental shift; for girls there is now 'more time devoted to mother craft, domestic economy and cookery, less concentration on Latin and Greek', while the boys learn the skills of industry and commerce. This is an explicitly and highly gendered shift from pure to applied education; 'This is the Scotland of the future, a Scotland that is turning from the academic brains of the past, a Scotland bent on exploring to the full all the possibilities of life'.

While the rights and obligations of citizenship abound in the overarching rhetoric of citizenship, in the British/Scottish context no codified bill of rights actually exists, as Will Hutton (1996) has recently argued in his attack on Britain's public sphere:

The British State conforms to no agreed rules nor clearly articulated principles; in other words, there is no written constitution, carefully setting out the functions of government and the rights and obligations of citizens. If the state is careless about its constitution and thus its relationship with those in whose name it purports to rule, it can hardly be a surprise that such carelessness imbues the whole of civil society.

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<sup>8</sup>I am drawing here on Giddens' reformulation of T.H. Marshall's (1973) typology of citizenship rights (Giddens, p. 200).



Notions of community, of membership, of belonging and of participation are established here or not at all. (p. 286)

This is crucial because it is in this public institutional climate that FoS operated. This is explicit in both committees' primary aim of promoting, stimulating and encouraging the production of Scottish films of national interest, and 'the national interest' is at the very centre of the rights and obligations of citizenship. One of the key roles of these 1938 documentaries was precisely to attempt to establish those notions of community, membership, belonging and participation that Hutton finds lacking in the British state.

The double edged sword of citizenship is reflected in the ambiguity of the notion of the state itself; "'The state" sometimes means an apparatus of government or power, sometimes the overall social system subject to that power' (Giddens, 1987, p. 17). In the documentary, not only does it mean both, but both positions may be occupied by the same subject. Hence the documentary's argument that Scottish schools 'are looking to the needs of their own country, to the needs of citizens who will take part in the government of modern Scotland.' The fundamentally contradictory experience of citizenship is most clearly articulated in the sequence at the end of the documentary where Sir William Macagnney, former permanent secretary of the Scottish Education Department is heard delivering a talk as part of the Scottish program for schools:

*Sir William:* You have inherited a great tradition, you must prove yourselves worthy of it. You, who are to be the citizens of the future, must try to understand the privileges you enjoyed as members of a great democracy, you must preserve and develop these privileges, and mould them to the needs of our changing world. That, children of Scotland, is the part you have to play as world citizens. If you play it well, you can be assured that the fame of Scotland shall continue to be great among other nations.

This rhetoric of inheritance, privilege, and opportunity belies the extent to which education, as the instrument of citizenship, is both an invitation and an obligation. What is crucial is the role of the mass media in disseminating that education, allowing the sanctioned voice of state authority to reach the national collectivity, the 'children of Scotland', the state administers over. More generally, both *The Children's Story* and *Scotland for Fitness* reproduce what Giddens has described as 'one of the major characteristics of the modern state': the state's regulation of the child's education, like the state's regulation of the adult's physical body, reflects 'a vast expansion of the capability of



state administrators to influence even the most intimate features of daily activity' (p. 10). But the notion of inheritance that informs *The Children's Story*, which as we shall see informs many other FoS documentaries, draws attention to another function of nationalised education:

*Voice Over:* Small wonder that the Scottish universities should send out into the world writers like Smollet, Carlyle and Walter Scott, philosophers like David Hume, scientists like Lord Kelvin, surgeons like Lister and Sir William McEwan. [...] in practical schools and technical college alike, the old spirit is still fostered, the spirit of initiative of study that made Scotland's industries famous throughout the world. [...] Behind these Scottish schools lies a great record of achievement, they have given to Britain soldiers, statesmen, engineers, men who helped to shape an empire.

Gellner (1983) argues that one key result of a standardised national education system is the production of a shared national culture. The nationalisation of education not only trained the emerging workforce in the skills necessary for industrialisation, and the documentary makes that clear, it also produces citizens with 'the distinctive style of conduct and communication' (p. 92) peculiar to that nation and embodied in particular *national* figures. In the film, the particular histories of Scott, Hume and Lister are reworked into a tradition of education, a tradition of initiative, brains and industry. This replacement of local folk cultures with a single 'shared culture', argues Gellner, means that the nation should be seen as a political community linked not only to the state, but also to the cultural boundary (p. 63).

While accepting the main thrust of Gellner's argument, Philip Schlesinger (1991) proposes that the national education model he employs 'needs to be more nuanced by allowing for conflicts over the creation of national education systems as transmitters of cultural uniformity' (p. 159). In particular, Schlesinger argues that Gellner's model of the nation-state as the legitimator of the nation's culture equates culture with the *official* version of national culture; arguing against this for a 'a view of culture as a site of contestation' (p. 160). He proposes a model 'which *problematizes* "national culture" and interrogates the strategies and mechanisms whereby it is maintained and its role in securing the dominance of given groups in a society' (p. 160). The Scotch Myths critique discussed in the previous chapter would be an example of the way in which intellectuals play a part in such contestation. This indicates the extent to which we must think of 'education' in the broader



sense, as an activity not limited to schools, colleges and universities of instruction, but also taking place in art galleries, museums, documentary films and the mass media in general, all of which are part of the process of public education.

We need finally, then, to consider the place of the documentary within the public sphere. Whereas, Giddens argues, the public sphere of traditional states was severely limited in terms both of how open it was and who it was open too, this public sphere becomes broadened with the development of printing and the extension of literacy, and becomes fully realised with the emergence of the nation-state. Indeed, given the centrality of the notion of citizenship to this new political community, Giddens argues that 'In the context of the modern state, the capability of different groupings to discursively formulate policies or programmes that express their interests and to make space in the public domain for promoting them are vital' (p. 211). The role of the mass media in the operation of the public sphere, particularly in the context of public service broadcasting, has been discussed elsewhere (cf. Scannell, 1989). In brief, the mass media are important because, as Steve Kendrick (1989) argues, 'in terms of the overall image of state action at the national level the individual is reliant overwhelmingly on the national media for information on state activity' (p. 79). This informational role is quite clearly articulated by Grierson (1938) himself, who regarded the function of the documentaries produced by the first Committee as similar to that of the documentaries he had produced for the Empire Marketing Board and the General Post Office: 'Most of these films, you see, are in the nature of enquiries - enquiries into what is going on. It is a sorry truth that in our complicated modern life it is very difficult to know what really is going on - difficult to see below the surface of events and realise the growing points. The cinema, some of us think, is a peculiarly able instrument when it comes to growing points and that is why we serve it' (p. 4).

I want to argue that the Films of Scotland documentaries should be seen as part of this mediated public sphere, occupying a particular position in relation to the state. In the documentaries, this public sphere is quite specifically a *national* public sphere, concerned with national problems, such as the management of the Scottish economy. We can explore this argument with reference to another of the Committee's films, *Wealth of a Nation*



(1938):

(Suited men sit around town council office)

*Voice Over*: Scotsmen faced the problem of re-shaping their national policy, they began to think of a new, modern Scotland planned on lines very different from the old. But now, let Scotsmen tell their own story:

*Sir Henry*: We are feeling the draught of the depression tremendously. In various parts of Scotland, particular industries have identified themselves with that district, but these industries are all gradually drifting away. You know the position in Dundee Professor?

*Professor*: Well, Sir Henry, Dundee was built on the jute industry. At present our industry is being undercut by the Indian factories.

*Civil Servant*: The herring industry too, is gradually losing its foreign markets, chiefly in Russia and Germany. This is particularly affecting the North-East coast.

This is the first form of public communication the documentary enables: access for a public audience to the private speech of the 'experts' who make up various local government bodies. The documentary provides a public domain, a domain open to public view for those who formulate and manage national economic policy to speak to, or at least be overheard by, those who are subject to the state's administration of that policy. This expansion of the public sphere is matched and driven by the extension of state sovereignty discussed earlier. The consequence of this, for Giddens, is that one of the things that makes the modern state distinct is that those subject to this sovereignty are far more 'aware of their membership in a political community and of the rights and obligations such membership offers' (p. 210) than earlier subjects. The national public sphere has a second communicative function then: it must demonstrate that the rights of citizenship are being met by the state.

(Two men watch a game of bowls)

*Bowls Spectator 1*: They made a good job of this bowling green.

*Bowls Spectator 2*: Aye.

*Bowls Spectator 1*: Never think it was a muck-heap a few years ago.

*Bowls Spectator 2*: Aye. [...]

(Group of cyclists ride through countryside)

*Voice Over*: Now, after a century of town-living, the Scottish people themselves are turning back to the mountains. Tribute to this new sense of citizenship is the Forestry Commission's gift to Scotland of Britain's first national park: a thousand square miles of Argyll within cycling distance of Glasgow.

This modern national public sphere must demonstrate that the state's administration of its resources, through its local and national councils and QUANGOS, is benefiting the state's subjects. In the 1938 documentaries this is explicitly bound up with the rhetoric of



citizenship. Given the political economy of FoS as an institution at arms length from the state, it is not surprising that the state's sovereignty is generally seen to be unproblematic. But this is complicated by the third communicative function of the public sphere, to provide a public space for interest groups other than the state and its agencies. One of the ways in which the documentary attempts to fill this role is by filming older, non-mediated examples of the public sphere in action, such as public town hall meetings:

(Packed public town hall meeting)

*Voice Over:* In every community that emerges from Scotland's reconstruction, a new spirit is making itself heard. [Cheers]

*Speaker on Stage:* Do you folks realise, that in the last five years this district has grown to such an extent, the population is approximately now thirty thousand, and they haven't even a playing field for the kiddies.

*Audience Member 1:* Why not write to the town council about it and see about that community centre they promised us some time ago?

*Audience Member 2:* It's no use writing to the town council, let us appoint a deputation now to go to the town council and pester the life out of them, until we see the playing fields and the community centre they promised us being built. [Cheers]

This example is interesting both because it suggests that the State has in fact reneged on its sovereign responsibility, and because it suggests that the written public sphere is not an effective means of public communication. To answer these suggestions, the documentary follows the town hall sequence with a 'private' sequence at the town council. The civil servants, having 'got rid of them' agree they will 'have to satisfy them', and discuss how they will meet the cost. Their rather ambiguous dialogue demonstrates two things. Firstly, we need to be wary of drawing too simple or direct a relation between the State and this group of documentaries. While clearly not independent of it, *Wealth of a Nation* in particular is not uncritical of the record of the economic and administrative apparatus behind its formation. Secondly, despite the rhetorical claims of citizenship, there is still an explicit divide between 'them' and 'us', between the state's administrators and its public. It is partly the role of the modern public sphere to provide not only an arena for mediation between these two groups, but also to articulate between them, to serve as a go between, to hold the middle ground (Kumar, 1977). In *Wealth of a Nation* this role is occupied by the voice-over narrator, who claims to speak to, for, and about a Scottish nation and a Scottish people.



Thus the group of 1938 films are interesting precisely because they occur at this particular historical juncture, and indeed they can only be understood in terms of these shifting historical circumstances. Institutionally, they are located within two key developments: state intervention in public culture, and the structural transformation of the public sphere into a mass mediated public sphere. What is particularly striking is the extent to which these documentaries, despite their differences of subject, operate at a specifically national level. My argument has been that central to an understanding of these documentaries has been the institutional operations, the 'technologies of government' (Foucault, 1979), of the modern nation itself. In other words, I have suggested that rather than simply representing the nation, the documentaries play a more formative role whereby, as part of the public sphere, they are among the many indirect mechanisms that actually make the nation's existence, and the governance of its subjects, possible (cf. Miller & Rose, 1990). The next chapter moves away from these institutional formations to look at the cultural formations within which the documentaries operate. In particular, the chapter is interested in two questions; the extent to which the documentaries contribute to the construction and maintenance of a sense of Scottish national identity, but firstly the cultural and discursive regimes on which the documentaries draw in their production of knowledge about Scotland.

## Chapter 4

### The Discursive Space of *The Face of Scotland*

The aim of this chapter is two-fold. Having established the various institutional sites from which the documentaries speak and to which they are related, our first task is to conduct an archaeological analysis in order to establish the discursive formations within which the documentaries operate in their production of knowledge about Scotland. Our second task is to establish the extent to which the first Committee's investment in the national interest incorporates an attempt to construct and maintain a sense of Scottish national identity. Accordingly, this chapter offers a close textual analysis of one of those documentaries from the first series of films produced by the Committee, *The Face of Scotland* (1938).<sup>1</sup>

For ease of analysis and argument, both aural and visual tracks of the documentary have been completely transcribed, broken down into sections, and are presented below. It should be stressed however that this does not imply that discursive formations operate primarily at the linguistic level. This is not discourse analysis but discursive analysis, where the basic unit of inquiry is not the sentence, or its subpart, but the statement. Foucault (1972) argues that knowledges are social practices and as such cannot be reduced to the linguistic or logical elements which, though they are present, do not exhaust the specification of 'knowledges'. Rather, a discursive formation is composed of statements, particular juxtapositions of signs; not the signs themselves but their articulation. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) point out that although Foucault originally denied that his conception of 'statements' was identical to John Austin and John Searle's 'speech acts', he was later to accept that they were the same (pp. 45-8); the difference lies in the fact that Foucault is only interested in a *particular kind* of speech act, the statement in a discursive formation.

The statement therefore is not a thing, but a function, what Foucault calls the 'enunciative function', that exists at four different levels of the discursive formation. Firstly, at the level of objects, the statement has the function of designating and organising the field of objects, that which is spoken about or operated on within the discourse; the statement is therefore 'a

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<sup>1</sup>*The Face of Scotland* was chosen primarily because of all the films produced by the Committee, it has the broadest scope of subject. This is not to suggest that it is in any way a privileged originary text.



group of domains in which such objects may appear' (Foucault, 1972, p. 91). Secondly, a statement always possesses a relation to a subject; like Vladimir Propp's (1968) 'tale roles' the subject is an 'empty function', a particular space within the structure of the discourse that particular individuals can occupy and speak or operate from. Thirdly, the enunciative function can only operate in combination with other statements; Foucault is clearly indebted to Saussure and the Structuralist legacy when he asserts that 'a statement always has borders peopled by other statements' (p. 97), and that since the discursive formation exists as the totality of its statements, any one statement implies a relation to all the others. Finally, given that discursive formations are composed of statements that survive and circulate, the statement has a form of materiality which enables its reproduction, a materiality largely determined by the institutional context in which the statement takes place. Our task now is to trace the operation of such statements in *The Face of Scotland* in order to discover if a regularity exists that would allow us to identify the operation of one or more discursive formations.

***THE FACE OF SCOTLAND (1938)***

<b>The Discourse of History</b>	
<b>Visual Track</b>	<b>Aural Track</b>
<b>Shot no.</b>	
<b>Titles</b>	
i. Films of Scotland emblem	Trumpet fanfare
ii. "The Face of Scotland"	
<b>Section One</b>	
1. Fade in, pan landscape	"Vastum ubique silentium..." [fade]
2. Pan up road in landscape	"Our advance guards were met with a widespread and desolate silence. The hills were deserted and though smoke rose from distant homes not a soul came forth to meet us."
3. Pan up road in landscape	
4. MS Hadrian's Wall	So spoke the Romans who marched their long straight roads through England to the Cheviots. They built a wall, it stands there to this day, a confession that here was one land, at least, they were not to conquer.
5. MS Hadrian's Wall	
6. MS Hadrian's Wall	
7. MS Hadrian's Wall	

The titles identify the institutional 'author' of the documentary, Films of Scotland, and state

the object of their gaze, Scotland's 'face'. The film begins by physically entering this object, the camera pans up the road walked by the Roman advance guards to look upon the deserted hills that met their gaze. Anchored by the aural track, the first series of shots are presented as point-of-view shots of those advance guards. Occupying the same optical space as the camera, we occupy the same position in relation to its object, the position of the subject. In beginning with the legionnaires the film begins with a threat to its object, Scotland, the threat of invasion, the penetration of the nation's boundary by an alien other. The rhetoric of this threatened invasion sets up a distinction between moving (modern) travellers, 'the Romans who marched their long straight roads', and a static (ancient) culture, 'not a soul came forth to meet us'. The wall that is built remains as a testimony both to that threat, and to the fact that it was repelled; 'here was one land, at least, they were not to conquer'. This opening is significant in that in commencing with the journey of a group of travellers into Scotland, presenting the audience with a perspective of Scotland from the outside, the documentary prefigures a trope which consistently recurs in the travelogues produced by the second Committee. We shall return to this trope later.

First, we need to establish what kind of discourse is operating in this opening sequence. The documentary begins with a quotation and translation of a Latin text, shots of desolate landscape, and descriptions of past events and present monuments. It is initially difficult to distinguish a particular discourse here, given that we rejected in the previous chapter the suggestion that there might exist a discourse whose privileged object is Scotland. Military advances, rising smoke, speech acts, marching and road building Romans, deserted hills and confessional walls; what are we to make of this catalogue? Foucault reminds us that it is not unity that we seek, but a regularity of dispersion:

In these fields of initial differentiation, in the distances, the discontinuities, and the thresholds that appear within it, discourse finds a way of limiting its domain, of defining what it is talking about, of giving it the status of an object - and therefore of making it manifest, nameable, and describable. (p. 41)

One of the things that allows this first section of the film to make sense is that its domain is in fact limited, that we can name what it is talking about. Its general object is the past, in this case the Roman advance into Scotland and the building of Hadrian's Wall some two



thousand years ago. We know its object is the past from its use of an ancient language, and the reference to an ancient monument and a historic event familiar to most British viewers from school book history. Further confirmation is added by the fact that grammatically the form of the verbs indicates the time of the actions has passed. But having named its general object, how does this discourse deal with the different kinds of object that constitute it; Romans, speech acts and walls?

According to Foucault, the level of the discursive formation we are describing here, the existence of objects, is partly made up of what he calls 'grids of specification'. The grids of specification are the systems according to which the discourse's objects are 'divided, contrasted, related, regrouped, classified, derived from one another as objects of a [...] discourse' (p. 42). How does this discourse divide up and classify its object? Roland Barthes (1981) has argued that historical utterance involves four units of content: existents and occurents, thematic units, and indices. Further, he argues that the former two categories can form lists or "collections" 'that are to a certain extent closed'; that is, their 'units end up by repeating themselves, in combinations that are obviously subject to variation' and 'certain rules of substitution and transformation' (p. 13). Barthes' notion of 'existents' and 'occurents' in historical discourse draws on Propp's identification of tale roles and functions in the wundertale, which again provide two closed lists that accommodate limited variation. Equally, Barthes notion that certain features of historical discourse operate under certain 'rules' prefigures Foucault's own arguments. Returning to Section One of the documentary, the abandoning of an invasion and the construction of a monument can be seen to be made up of a particular 'grid of specification' composed of existents: advance guards, hills, smoke, homes, Romans, roads, England, the Cheviots, and a wall; and occurents: meeting, deserting, rising, speaking, marching, building, standing, and conquering. However, whereas some discourses are explicit about their own sets of classifications, since they are circulated in books, reports, and lectures, this is not true, I would argue, of the particular way in which this discourse operates here. It lacks the reflexivity of the kinds of discourse associated with the academy: existents and occurents are grids we have imposed after the event.

Before we leave the field of objects, we have two more questions to answer. Firstly, where is the past appearing as an object of contemplation? What are, to use Foucault's phrase, its 'surfaces of emergence'? (p. 41). In this instance the immediate answer is the documentary film, which functions as an exhibitionary technology in which the past emerges as the object of a particular kind of knowledge. But given that this is a relatively recent communication technology, it suggests that, as Foucault argues, 'these surfaces of emergence are not the same for different societies, at different periods, and in different forms of discourse' (p. 41). In fact, in the opening section of the documentary we come across another surface in which the past appears, the journal of the travelling legionnaire, which narrates a history of the same object. The precise relation between these two surfaces, the journal of travel and the documentary, is the subject of the following chapters.

The final question we must ask of this level of discourse is who are its 'authorities of delimitation'? Which group of individuals has the recognised authority to designate, name, and establish the past as an object? This question takes us to the second level of the discursive formation, what Foucault calls 'the formation of enunciative modalities' or modes of statement. This level regulates how statements referring to the objects of the discursive formation are made. 'First question: who is speaking? Who, among the totality of speaking individuals, is accorded the right to use this sort of language (*langage*)? Who is qualified to do so?' (p. 50). It is difficult to answer this with respect to the documentary. The most obvious answer would be the narrator (and director) of the film, Basil Wright. But it is not clear what, beyond his experience with the medium and enunciative ability, qualifies him to use this sort of language. However, this is one of the reasons why film theorists referred to this particular style of documentary address as voice-of-God narration: the statements the documentary makes transcend the fixed terrestrial space of the visual track, emanating from a disembodied voice. But it is a voice that carries authority, the presumption that what it says is true. How the enunciator achieves this status is unclear, the institutional criteria it has satisfied to achieve this status are not stated. This was, as we have seen, one of the key points made by the anti-realists, who argued that the authority of the documentary came from the genre's apparent unmediated access to the real. The right



to make statements that carry the presumption of their truth comes from the fact that the evidence of their verity is there in the image track, and from the partial authority of the Roman witness to the events that took place.<sup>2</sup>

But we might argue that there is a displaced group of individuals who more clearly occupy this discursive position, those who made the original statements from which the narration is derived. The answer to the question 'who is speaking'? has to be, by proxy, the historian, a writer, expert or authority on history. The authors of the documentary have only a secondary or borrowed authority derived from their research of the statements produced by this group of experts. Historians are qualified to speak about the past because they have followed particular pedagogic routes and satisfied particular criteria of competence and knowledge.

As Foucault suggests, this entails particular institutional sites from which the historian speaks, and from which their 'discourse derives its legitimate source and point of application' (p. 51). In the case of the historian this site is the academy, a higher, specialised school of scholarly activity. The academy has its own hierarchy and division of labour in which the historian occupies a particular position, within a department or faculty of history, pursuing pedagogical and research activities. This site then is itself broken down into smaller units: the lecture hall, the seminar room, the study, the library, and the archive. This is not to suggest that the institutional site is a physical building, but a place of constant production and circulation of particular kinds of knowledge, materially manifested in books, physical spaces and designated individuals. The documentary, we might argue, is one of a number technologies which mediate between the institutional site of the academy and a popular audience. As we shall see, in this act of mediation something happens to the discourse itself.

Foucault argues that 'the positions of the subject are also defined by the situation that it is possible for him [sic] to occupy in relation to the various domains or groups of objects' (p. 52). In other words, what actions is the historian able to carry out in relation to the past?

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<sup>2</sup>The voice-over narration in virtually all the FoS documentaries is male.

In the network of research the historian is largely a reading and writing subject, occasionally an interviewing subject, sifting and deciphering a mass of written, recorded and transcribed information. In the informational network, the historian is involved in exchanging this information with other peers, passing on this information to trainees, and crucially publishing this information for the academic and public domain, where the historian's statements may be read and passed on along a communication chain, some of it finding its way to the mass media and out to the mediated public sphere.

Foucault's third level of discourse, the formation of concepts, describes the space within which conceptual statements are deployed and combine with each other. In discussing this level we are interested in identifying the modes of description, assertion, and definition proper to the discourse; what kinds of statement may appear next to each other, and 'the various rhetorical *schemata* according to which groups of statements may be combined' (p. 57). If this discourse is primarily involved in making statements about past events, then it is the connections that it makes between those events, and the evaluation of those connections that concerns us here. Foucault argues that these links constitute what he calls 'the old questions of the traditional analysis (What link should be made between disparate events? How can a causal succession be established between them? What continuity or overall significance do they possess? Is it possible to define a totality, or must one be content with reconstituting connections?)' (pp. 3-4).

Unlike the previous level, the operation of this level of discourse is more explicitly evident in the documentary itself. What organises the appearance and circulation of statements in the first section of the documentary is *narrative*. By narrative we mean 'the recounting of two or more events (or a situation and an event) that are logically connected, occur over time, and are linked by a consistent subject into a whole' (Stam, Burgoyne, & Flitterman-Lewis, p. 69). As we have already seen, the documentary narrates a series of events and situations that are linked by their connection with a particular moment in Scottish history. The logic of the connection of these events is three-fold: a chronological connection, they marched their roads then they built a wall; a spatial connection, the actions occur along a line through England to the Cheviots; and a cause and effect relationship they built a wall,



the wall is there today. What is interesting is the fact that these connections are not driven by a theory of military operation and strategy, but by the force of narrative itself. The historical discourse, in this instance, not only articulates its statements through narrative, it also, as Hayden White (1975) has argued, connects these statements in 'response to the imperatives of narrative discourse in general' (p. 102). Narrative, we might argue, is this discourse's unspoken theory.

Drawing on Genette's (1980) work on narratology, we can identify how these narrative imperatives operate as part of the discourse's conceptual field. For instance, we might note that the section begins with a rare example of "repeating form" where the same event (the meeting of the Roman advance guards with silence) is narrated twice. Although the unusualness of this narrative device is blurred by the fact that the second narrating is a translation from the Latin of the first, it is interesting to note that a later FoS documentary on Stirlingshire, *The Heart of Scotland* (1962) begins in exactly the same manner with exactly the same line of text. Secondly we might note the use of "summary" in the first three lines of narration, where a period of a number of years is condensed. This is followed by an "ellipsis", 'They built a wall, it stands there to this day', where almost two thousand years of story-time elapse across a single comma.

The whole section might be taken as an example of the way in which the enunciative modality of this discourse is largely an act of elaboration. Roland Barthes (1967) argues that 'the historian is not so much a collector of facts as a collector and related of signifiers; that is to say, he organises them with the purpose of establishing positive meaning and filling the vacuum of pure, meaningless series' (p. 16). For Barthes, this elaboration is ideological. In order to understand why, we need to turn to Foucault's final level of discourse, the formation of strategies.

As we noted in the introduction, the Foucault of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* restricts the operation of this level to a question of theoretical options; 'A discursive formation does not occupy [...] all the possible volume that is opened up to it of right by the systems of formation of its object, its enunciations, and its concepts; it is essentially incomplete,

owing to the system of formation of its strategic choices' (p. 67). At this point in Foucault's work then, the formation of strategies simply determines which of all the possible objects a particular discourse could talk about, and which of all the possible subject positions it could occupy, and which of all the possible conceptual strategies it employs, it actually chooses. But we also noted in the introduction that in Foucault's later genealogical turn the formation of strategies and thematic choices take on an increased importance as it is this level above all that articulates with non-discursive practices and institutions, enabling Foucault to investigate how discourses are used and what role they play in society (Dreyfus & Rabinow, p. xxi).<sup>3</sup>

How does this thematic level of discourse operate in the first section of the documentary? One way of approaching the thematic in discourse is suggested by Hayden White (1978). For White, discourse is 'a product of consciousness's effort to come to terms with problematic domains of experience' (p. 5). The problem we face, according to White is that 'when we seek to make sense of such problematic topics as human nature, culture, society, and history [...] our discourse always tends to slip away from our data towards the structure of consciousness with which we are trying to grasp them' (p. 1). White argues that 'the human sciences have remained captive of the *figurative* modes of discourse in which they constituted (rather than simply signified) the objects of which they pretend to deal' (p. 231). White calls this the '*tropical*' element in discourse; 'tropics is the process by which all discourse 'constitutes' the objects which it pretends only to describe realistically and analyse objectively' (p. 2). They are manifest in '*tropes*', deviations from literal, conventional, or 'proper' language use.

The use of figurative language in the first section is quite striking; 'widespread and desolate silence', 'hills were deserted', 'not a soul'. The troping of the narration conjures up bleakness in the way it signifies a general absence of sound and people. This is given a melancholy, rather than sinister suggestion by the tone of both the voice and the music. The second example of the tropical nature of discourse in this section is the narration's

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<sup>3</sup>Although, as we shall see, the possibility of such a relation is in fact suggested by the archaeological Foucault (1972, pp. 67-8).



statement that the wall signifies 'a confession that here was one land, at least, they were not to conquer'. The narration makes no attempt to explain why this should signify such a confession, indeed given the absence of a response to the arrival of the advance guard described in the previous sentences this claim seems rather bizarre. But to argue that the narration is factually wrong, a distortion of the real events that took place, is to miss the point of the kind of analysis proposed by the likes of Foucault, White, and Hunter that we are trying to carry out here. Our interest in the tropical nature of discourse is in the way in which it produces knowledge about Scotland in its own terms.

We might note instead that what the narration does is to turn the wall into a monument, something that preserves the *memory* of an important event. The fact that the wall is no longer equivalent to the geo-political border is irrelevant to its figurative function in the documentary as the national boundary between Scotland and England (the importance of such boundaries in the definition of the social group is stressed in the literature on national identity and is returned to later (cf. Schlesinger, 1991; Gilroy, 1987)). Further, the reminder that 'it stands there to this day' creates a physical link between ancient past and contemporary present. Only further analysis will reveal the articulation between this troping and the non-discursive practices and institutions that surround the documentary itself.

Having identified and described the regularities at the different levels of this discursive formation, we are now in a position to suggest that the discourse that structures the first section of the documentary is the discourse of *history*. We need to be clear about what we mean by this. When we say that this section belongs to the discourse of history, we do not mean that this section is a piece of historiography. In other words, as we argued in the Introduction, there is a distinction between discursive formations and epistemological disciplines. Although contemporary historiography employs a number of the discursive features we have identified here, it eschews others which, we might suggest, belong to its own history. However, in the passage from the academy to the documentary, these illegitimate statements are reproduced.

Stephen Bann (1990) argues that up to the end of the eighteenth century, 'History has its own territory and its own battery of effects, but it is not regarded as being qualitatively, or cognitively different from other types of texts' (p. 39). However, towards the end of that century Bann argues that there is a shift in the discipline from rhetorical virtuosity to cognitive responsibility, and that by 1800 the historiography of Leopold von Ranke and the German school 'adopted its "scientific" paradigm, and furnished itself with new tools of critical analysis' (p. 36). As part of its newly acquired scientific status, nineteenth century historians explicitly acknowledge that their writing is an amalgamation of the historical documents detailed in their notes and references. The section from *The Face of Scotland* discussed above would fail this kind of scrutiny: its extensive use of figurative language and narrative strategies, and its failure to legitimate or authorise its statements 'scientifically', indicate that it belongs to the pre-1800 discourse of history.

But there is perhaps a more fundamental distinction. The shift between pre and post-1800 historical writing is often conceived as a shift from historicism to historiography (Bann, 1981, p. 23), a conception usually supported by Ranke's dictum: 'History has had assigned to it the task of judging the past, of instructing the present for the benefit of ages to come. The present study does not assume such a high office; it wants to show only what actually happened' (*wei es eigentlich gewesen*)' (qtd. in Bann, p. 21). But unlike Ranke, *The Face of Scotland* is clearly not content with merely 'showing what happened'. Its task is that of the earlier form of history, of constructing a memory for the Scotland of the present, a "popular memory" beginning with the arrival of the Romans,<sup>4</sup> the first threat of otherness. The object of this discourse is not so much the past as the relation between past and present, and the monuments that signify that relation and guarantee its survival. And the

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<sup>4</sup>The literal use of the term 'popular memory' here is at odds with the way it was used in historiography in the 1970s. Foucault (1974) defined popular memory as the action by people 'barred from writing, from producing their books themselves, from drawing up their own historical accounts', of recording their own history (pp. 21-2). The Popular Memory Group in the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University carried out this type of work, distinguishing it from the kind of public representations of history, particularly 'national' history, that *The Face of Scotland* is an example of. For a discussion of popular memory see Tribe, 1977/8.



documentary is just one of a number of exhibitionary technologies within which this discourse operates.<sup>5</sup>

## **The Discourse of Ethnography**

### **Section Two**

8. Pan up loch to hills in mist	Mountains, lochs, moors and marshes. Cold, cloudy, heavy with rain, it offered to its inhabitants only a meagre living from the faces of the braes, the roots of the hills, and the rough stony wastes. Coarse pasture for sheep, shallow soil for crops, heather for their roofs, and peat for their fuel.
9. LS loch	
10. Pan from hills to loch	
11. MS stony land	
12. LS Moor land	
13. LS grazing sheep	
14. MS stone cottage	
15. Pan to man with horse cart	
16. MS man clips a dead rabbit	
17. CU same man's face	
18. LS Highland cattle	
19. XLS people digging peat	The land that bred a stern and hardy race, toughened by the struggle for existence on its ungrateful soil.
20. LS ditto with loch behind	
21. LS man digging peat	
22. LS man shovelling peat	
23. LS man shovelling peat	
24. CU man's face	
25. CU peat digging tool	
26. MS woman stacking peat	
27. MS boy loads peat on cart	
28. LS ditto	
29. MS cart and horse	
30. LS of boy, cart and hills	

Again, grammatically we know from the form of the verbs that the events narrated in this section have passed. But past events are not the exclusive object of the discourse of history; discourses may share objects, subjects, concepts, strategies and institutional sites. However, there are fundamental differences between this section of the documentary and the previous section, and further consideration of the four levels of discourse suggests we are dealing with a different discursive formation. Firstly, the objects of both the aural and visual tracks are no longer military but climatological, topographical, and agricultural; precipitation, soil quality, and farming methods provide the dispersion of objects in this instance. Secondly, the human group described in this section is conceived as a different kind of object from the Romans in the previous section. The description of the 'stern and

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<sup>5</sup>Bennett (1988) is primarily concerned with the museum. We might add the heritage site as an exhibitionary space which serves a similar function (cf. Corner & Harvey, 1991; Hewison, 1987).

hardy race' that inhabits and works on the land explicitly introduces a classificatory grid hitherto absent. While the Romans are conceived as soldiers from Rome classified according to their professional occupation or military position ('advance guards'), the Scots are classified according to a racial grid, as members of a particular cultural group that shares the same mode of subsistence within a defined geographical space. We might suggest at this stage then that what provides the unifying principle or regularity of this dispersion of objects in this section is the concept of *culture*. Whereas the definition of 'the past' as merely that which has in time elapsed seems uncontroversial, the definition of culture as 'a whole way of life' is itself a historically specific product of a discourse that will be elaborated in the following chapters.

The shift to this section's 'controlling discourse' is also manifest in its 'enunciative modalities'. Firstly, historical narration is replaced by cultural description. Secondly, observation takes on a central role; like the first section, the aural track of this section is composed of four sentences, but the number of shots has increased from seven to twenty two, reinforcing the suggestion that we are dealing with a discourse less concerned with narrating a succession of 'significant' historical events than with observing and describing the mode of existence of human groups. Moving the spectator from a point of recipient of narration to one of observation, this section ends with a series of fifteen images; a man clips a dead rabbit, highland cattle graze, and groups of people cut, dig and shovel peat onto a cart. Whereas in the previous section the camera occupied the point of view of the Roman legionnaires and the soundtrack allowed them the space to speak, the human group in this section are presented as objects for us to observe: they never face the camera directly, they never address the audience. This group is anonymous, unidentified, and other than one facial close up followed by a close up of a peat digging tool, shot from a distance.

Who speaks in this discourse, who occupies the position of the subject? The only voice we hear is that of the same narrator of the previous section, an empty subject whose authority is derived from the discourse on which the narration draws. At this point it becomes relevant to ask who is not speaking? In the previous section we heard the voice of a



Roman historian, speaking from the past to the present. In this section we are presented with individuals who existed contemporary to the moment of the film's production. Nevertheless, access to the position of the speaking subject is denied them. They are described by (an)other, a subject outside the dispersion of objects of which he speaks. The film, then, reproduces the power relationship of the discourse, setting up a clear divide between authorised subject (narrator/audience) and passive object (other culture). We might argue then that the discourse that informs this section is that of *ethnography*, 'the interpretation of cultures' (Clifford, 1988, p. 39), a discourse whose primary mode of operation is the observation and description of the way of life of other cultures.

This becomes clear when we turn to the section's conceptual field. Compared to the previous section, we might argue that this is marked by what we might call a "reversal of affective actions". In the previous section we were introduced to a human group who took actions on objects (the Romans marched roads and built walls), in this section we are introduced to a human group who are acted upon by their environment ('the land that bred a stern and hardy race'). Conceptually, then, this is a discourse that is primarily interested in, and conceives a particular relationship between human groups or cultures and their environments. Agriculture, housing and fuel are understood in terms of a reaction to environment rather than an action on it. The passage employs the ethnographic trope of creating an existential, rather than purely functional, relationship between the people and the landscape, that is not only explicitly stated in the narration ('toughened by the struggle for existence on its ungrateful soil'), but is also suggested by the inter-cutting between shots of the land, shots of its inhabitants, and shots of the tools they use. The film's conceptual field is therefore largely structured by a combination of 'organicism', 'the land that bred', and evolutionism, 'struggle for existence'.

In terms of the section's strategies, we might note three distinguishing features. Firstly, the figurative language 'meagre living', 'coarse pasture', 'stony wastes', presents a continuity with the previous passage, now adding a notion of overcoming hardship to the melancholia, heightened by the use of alliteration and repetitive sentence structure. Secondly, there is the description of this cultural group as a 'race'. While we might note

that the meaningfulness of race as a scientific category has been contested (cf. Solomos, 1993, p. 8), and that by the time Scotland could be classed as a nation it was composed of five distinct ethnic groups not only from Scotland but also from England, Ireland and Scandinavia, our interest in this strategy is not as an empirical distortion or mistake. Rather, we are interested in how this strategy is part of an overall apparatus for transmitting norms of statement about Scotland as an object of popular knowledge. Before considering this question, it is useful to turn to the third strategy, the section's treatment of historical time.

At the start of the section, the image track appears to be illustrating the descriptive narration of the aural track, with shots of moor land, and a stone cottage with a thatched roof. However, this relationship is not as simple as it first appears. The narration appears to be talking about some period in Scotland's past which, although unspecified, is implied to be somewhere between the departure of the Romans and the Industrial Revolution. This vagueness is itself interesting. The image track however, at this point in the film, is contemporary, that is, shot in 1937. Either these shots are reconstructions, although there is nothing to indicate that this is the case, or else the implication is that this 'way of life' still continues in parts of rural Scotland today. In which case, like the treatment of Hadrian's Wall in the previous section, a historical continuity is implied. When this strategy is combined with the previous one, the elision of the difference between race, nationality and culture, facilitated by the epistemological vagueness of the homogenising terms the narration uses ('land' and 'inhabitants'), then it becomes clear that these disparate strategies in fact serve a distinct function. We shall return to what this function might be, and how it relates to particular non-discursive formations, particularly the Committee's investment in the 'national interest', later.

## **Discursive Oscillation**

### **Section Three**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 31. MS Mons Meg canon on<br>Edinburgh castle | It was wrecked with wars. Across its<br>landscapes rose many castles and keeps, |
| 32. LS Linlithgow castle                     | guarding the bridges and the passes,  |



- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| 33. LS Stirling castle  | protecting the precious crops the enemy came to destroy. Edinburgh, Stirling,  |
| 34. LS Edinburgh castle | Linlithgow, Dumbarton Rock, the Border   |
| 35. LS Castle Ruins     | Keeps. They stand there still today.   |
| 36. LS View from castle | Ruins which changed hands a hundred times as victory chanced to the English bow or the Scottish spear, and which yet bear manifestations as having been places of strength and terror. |

With the third section the documentary switches back to the discourse of history. This switching between two distinct discursive formations requires some consideration, for it does not seem the sort of behaviour one would expect from 'serious' speech acts. How can the text's production of knowledge remain coherent and authoritative, how that is can it operate within the rules of discourse, when it behaves in this manner? What is the effect of this discursive oscillation?

To begin to answer these question it is instructive to look at this particular example. In moving from the second section to the third the image track cuts from a long shot of a boy beside a horse and cart with loch and hills in the background to a mid shot of a canon on a castle. As they stand these two images are absolutely different, there is no apparent continuity between the rural image of agricultural labour and the urban image of one of the technologies of warfare. The idea that there is a connection between the two is driven by the force of the conventions of filmmaking and viewing; as viewers we expect a cause and effect, or call and answer relation between one shot and the next in terms of either narrative or dialectics. The key point is not what that connection itself might be, but the fact that a connection is implied in the first place.

Similarly, the aural track cuts from 'The land that bred a stern and hardy race, toughened by the struggle for existence on its ungrateful soil' to 'It was wrecked with wars'. The coherence of the narration is affected by a simple linguistic manoeuvre, the 'it' of the latter sentence refers to 'the land' of the former, so we know we are dealing with the same place; the 'creative geography' (Kuleshov) of the documentary's editing is therefore contained within a defined geo-political space, Scotland. Finally, continuity is also managed by the personal identity of the narrator, which up to this point remains stable. Thus although

within strictly discursive terms we are no longer dealing with the same subject as in the previous section, in the terms of the documentary the subject position is occupied by the same human figure.

This oscillation between two discourses within the same text opens up another, more fundamental question. Is there a difference between the way discourses behave in their 'official' institutional sites and the way they behave when they re-emerge in popular culture? When a text or document operates within Foucault's 'serious' context, its 'original' surface of emergence, then it remains within the discursive formation proper to that institutional site; when the discourse of history operates within the academy it does not share its textual space with competing discourses. But when a text occupies the more public sphere of popular culture, then our analysis suggests that there is a loosening of rules, such that it is no longer constrained to operate within just one discursive formation; documents within popular culture can be acted upon by more than one discourse at a time. How is this loosening possible? We might suggest that when a discourse crosses from its 'serious' institutional site into the terrain of popular culture, then that discourse's enunciative modalities undergo a transition; a different set of speakers, with a different set of qualifications and criteria of competence now occupy the discourse's subject position, primarily because that discourse is now made from a different institutional site, no longer the academy but the mass media; and this institutional site operates under a different set of rules. Nevertheless, and this is an important point to which I will return, the position that this subject is able to occupy in relation to the objects of the discourse remains the same. Consequently, the question of power remains the same.

Returning to this particular section, we might note that the object of the discourse of history is again, as it was in the first section, military history. Within all the possible objects that the discourse could talk about, its thematic choice to use Foucault's term is again a history of the battles and monuments of warfare. Interestingly, Colin McArthur (1980) has argued that the representation of (British) history on television is dominated by two subjects, the military and the monarchy. Our analysis already suggests that *The Face of Scotland* falls into this preference too. We will return to the question of why this might



be the case below; in Chapter Six we will consider how far this is true of the rest of the FoS documentaries.

However, as in the previous two sections, the narration is particularly vague when it comes to the question of the precise historical moments at which particular events occurred ('It was wrecked with wars', 'ruins which changed hands a hundred times'), and time is both condensed and ellipsed. The text contains more of the discourse's figurative strategies, so that victory 'chances' to either side, but the switch to a military subject does not prevent a thematic continuity with the melancholic rhetoric of the previous sections; '*wrecked* with wars', 'the *precious crops* the enemy came to *destroy*' (my emphasis). As in the first section, historical monuments themselves become the privileged actants in the discourse; it is the castles and keeps that guard the bridges and the passes. Just as Hadrian's wall was seen to signify a confession, other military buildings 'bear manifestations as having been places of strength and terror'. Further, these monuments also 'stand there still today', physical reminders of a military history; the image track illustrates this historical continuity in shooting Edinburgh castle from the clearly contemporary street below.

Finally, and this is a point I will return to below, the domain in which all this military activity takes place, and which these monuments bear witness to, is a *national* one; the limit of historical events is the limit of the national geo-political space. More specifically, the military conflicts the narration figuratively constructs are between 'the English bow' and 'the Scottish spear'; and just as Hadrian's Wall draws attention to the boundary between these particular nations, so these other monuments testify, within the terms of the discourse, a history of national conflict with 'the enemy', the English. The space of history, in this instance, is a national space, defined and constructed in relation to its 'other'.

### The Melancholy Trope

#### Section Four

- 37. LS Pan crofts, walls, horses
- 38. LS crofts
- 39. LS farmhouse and plough
- 40. MS two men outside farm
- 41. CU ditto

As time passed, the people of this land made for themselves a simple but individual civilisation. Their communities were very small, for they were limited by the fertility of the land. The binding factor in these communities was the family. So in crofts, farmsteads and townships, they made their

42. LS farming complex	own customs and traditions, and their own
43. LS man with plough	culture.
44. LS man and dogs walk off	From these people came Robert Burns, and it was their life that he celebrated:
45. LS Pan to stone church	"To make a happy fireside clime, To weans and wife; That's the true pathos and sublime, Of human life."
46. LS small church	Their forthright nature demanded a religion which allowed for a personal relationship between God and Man. A religion whose worship and code of duty fitted the hard realities of their daily life.
47. MS small church	

Via a combined ellipsis and condensation ('As time passed') the documentary switches from historical narration back to ethnographic description. Although the discursive object is again the way of life of a cultural group ('the people of this land'), we are dealing with a different aspect of that object than Section Two, a different section of its classificatory grid. Whereas Section Two was concerned with the mode of subsistence of the cultural group, their agricultural methods and housing, this section is concerned with the culture's kinship systems ('the binding factor in these communities was the family'), its forms of settlement ('their communities were very small', 'crofts, farmsteads and townships'), and cultural forms ('their own customs and traditions, and their own culture', and their religion). That is, whereas the earlier section was concerned with the culture's basic 'struggle for existence', this later section deals with its social and cultural formations. The first line of narration of this section makes the conceptual logic of this shift explicit; 'As time passed, the people of this land made for themselves a simple but individual civilisation'. In the historical time that has elapsed between Sections Two and Four, the cultural group has become 'civilised', and evidence of this is the social and cultural formations it has developed.

In terms of the second level of discourse, the formation of enunciative modalities, we should again note that the image track is recognisably ethnographic, with long shots of crofts, farms, and ploughing activities, and a close up of two men (the previous close ups were also of men) who again, as objects of the discourse, are denied the space to address the camera/audience directly. Burns is given a privileged position (as he is given a privileged position in the Scottish calendar) in that he, like the Roman chronicler, can



contribute to the narration. But his authority is contained within the ethnographic discourse, as the introduction to his verse indicates; 'From these people came Robert Burns, and it was their life that he celebrated'. Given Burns' place within the Scottish heritage industry, it is no accident that he, rather than say Allan Ramsey or Robert Fergusson, writers further down the nation's hierarchy of mimetic capital, is cited. In fact, *The Heart of Scotland*, originally published in 1934 but reprinted the same year as the documentary, uses exactly the same extract from Burns, arguing that 'he discharged in these lines the poet's sole duty of speaking the authentic voice of his race' (Blake, 1938, p. 79).

Conceptually, we might note two things. Firstly, following the previous section's assertion of national difference across the border (from the English), national similarity within the borders is asserted; the civilisation is 'individual', with its 'own' customs, traditions and culture. Secondly, the organicist rhetoric noted earlier is repeated, the cultural group are referred to as 'the people of this land', and this land again plays a formative proactive role in the way of life of the people; 'their communities were very small, for they were limited by the fertility of the land'. This organicist conceptualisation of the relationship between the people and the land is used again at the end of this section to facilitate the segue from the ethnographic to the historical: 'Their forthright nature demanded a religion which [...] fitted the hard realities of their daily life'.

The recurrent emphasis on these 'hard realities' is indicative of the way in which the melancholic figurative strategy identified in previous sections is continued; 'a simple but individual civilisation', 'limited by the fertility of the land'. This is emphasised by the quotation from Robert Burns and its reference to the 'pathos' of life. The previous chapter noted that McArthur (1983a) and Spring (1990) argue that what they describe as an 'elegiac discourse' is generally prominent in versions of Scottish history, where the focus is often literally on death itself. I want to argue, however, that this is an inappropriate term to apply to the thematic strategy I am discussing here, and that while the terms elegiac and melancholic may appear similar, there is a crucial difference. The problem with describing the troping in *The Face of Scotland* as elegiac is that while an elegy is a song of mourning or a funeral song, a lament for something now lost or discontinued, the other thematic

strategy the documentary employs is one of constructing continuity; the documentary produces a past and a national character that still exists in the present. To break this carefully manufactured continuity by suggesting that Scottish history and Scottish ways of life are gone for good, would contradict what I will argue is the key strategy of the documentary.

Alternatively, we might argue that this illustrates Beveridge and Turnbull's (1989) thesis that perceptions of pre-1707 Scottish rural history are informed by the inferiorist discourse discussed in Chapter Two. They argue that Scotland's topography is described as 'bleak' and 'savage', and pre-improvement agricultural technology as 'barbarous' (p. 31). Further, this vocabulary is 'gradually extended to more obviously anthropogenic aspects of the landscape including the architecture of the rural buildings and the rural population, who are characterised as 'aboriginal and deformed' (p. 32). But again there is no evidence that this is the case here; firstly, there is nothing in the documentary to indicate that the observations about Scottish rural life are confined to Scottish history before the Union of Parliaments; secondly rather than suggesting there was a problem with the 'hard realities of their daily life', that it was somehow backward or ill formed, the narration suggests instead that those realities were a source of cultural strength for the Scots in that they engendered the 'forthright nature' of the national character.

More crucially, I want to argue that if we take an archaeological approach to the narration's indulgence in persistent misery, we discover that it is neither peculiarly Scottish, nor is it anything peculiar to twentieth century historiography. For instance, an archaeology of melancholia would include in the mid-nineteenth century what the art critic John Rothenstein (1965) has described as the 'haunting pathos' of the works of the Pre-Raphaelite painters, particularly those of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (p. 122). In the Renaissance, the fashionable melancholia of men, particularly in the romantic context of tragic passion, is satirised by Rosalind in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, and given extensive theoretical consideration in his contemporary Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholia*; while Foucault (1986) describes how for the physicians of the Hellenistic and Roman world of the first two centuries, 'there does not exist a more eminently useful remedy



against melancholy' (p. 118) than sexual intercourse. This is not to argue that there is some spurious continuity between these occurrences, a 'tradition of representation' where the notion of melancholia becomes increasingly refined. Rather, as these examples begin to indicate, we should look at melancholia as something that has operated in various fields at various times, in the discourses of history, art and medicine, each with their own rules of use. In the case of *The Face of Scotland*, the function of melancholy is to operate as a general characteristic of a cultural group. Conceived within the organicist framework in of this section, this characteristic is best encapsulated by the Scots word 'dour', which suggests both the grimness of the land and the obstinate and stoical persistence of the Scots in forging a living from it.

### Points of Diffraction

#### Section Five

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>48. MS statue of John Knox</p> <p>49. LS women in black outside house</p> <p>50. MS bottles of alcohol locked up</p> <p>51. LS women in black outside house</p> <p>52. MS fishing boats drawn up on shore</p> <p>53. MS church</p> <p>54. LS church steeple in city</p> <p>55. MS church congregation</p> <p>56. MS ditto</p> <p>57. CU gravestone</p> <p>58. MS church &amp; graveyard</p> <p>59. MS church congregation</p> <p>60. CU ditto, two young girls sing</p> <p>61. CU ditto, two old women sing</p> <p>62. CU woman playing organ</p> <p>63. CU boy pumping organ</p> <p>64. CU boys singing</p> | <p>In this, their leader and prophet was John Knox:</p> <p>"The doctrine of God's eternal predestination is so necessary to the church of God, that without the same can faith never be truly taught ne'r truly established."</p> <p>In the 18th and 19th century this Calvinist creed became famous for its strictness. The Elders of the kirk could summon and punish all those who defiled the Sabbath with worldly activities. It was sinful to feed the cattle, to draw or carry water, fishermen might not touch their nets nor their boats before midnight on the Sabbath, children were not to play, not even fires were to be lit.</p> <p>To attend the kirk was compulsory.</p> <p>"God shall not pity them but laugh at their calamity. The righteous company in heaven shall rejoice in the execution of God's judgement and shall sing while the smoke rises up forever."</p> <p>But from this religion, which made the Scot's Sabbath famous the world over, came, too, the grace and simplicity of the metrical songs which you may hear sung in many a Scots kirk today.</p> |
|---|--|

The discursive shift that takes place between Sections Four and Five from ethnography back to the discourse of history illustrates the earlier argument that the same object, in this case religion, may appear in more than one discourse. The key difference that allows us to distinguish between the two lies in the third level of discourse, the formation of concepts. The documentary shifts from cultural description to historical narration, again manifest in a reversal of affective actions. In Section Four, Calvinism is a system of belief peculiar to, and 'demanded' by the way of life of a cultural group. In Section Five, Calvinism is a historical phenomenon staged with a leading character, John Knox himself, while the Calvinist creed is a structured way of life imposed from above, by the Kirk Elders, rather than an organic way of life produced from below, by the people.

This difference is also manifest in the reported speech acts in the two sections; Burns reflects on the way of life of the cultural group, while Knox plays a formative part in producing it. Knox and the Protestant Reformation have the dramatic potential necessary to the narrativised construction and reproduction of Scottish popular memory that the film is engaged in. Knox, that is, has become one of the key actors in the staging of the Scottish past, a fact confirmed by the image track which features a statue of Knox as an extract from one of his sermons on the doctrine of God's eternal predestination is read out. As an object of historical knowledge, Calvinism is documented as a rigid system of regulations for behaviour, managed through a system of proscriptions and punishment, and an ethical hierarchy of power. Further, as the documentary itself suggests, the perceived character of Calvinism fits in perfectly with the dour Scottish character the documentary has constructed through its figurative troping. Indeed, the documentary foregrounds the 'strictness' of Calvinism as that which the religion is 'famed' for; other than interior and exterior shots of churches and their congregation, there are shots of bottles of alcohol locked up and fishing boats drawn up on the shore, two images which will become locked in a script with the Sabbath and Scottishness ten years later in the Ealing comedy *Whisky Galore* (1948).

There is a striking lacuna in this account of Scotland's religious history, the pre-Reformation Catholic Church. But, in this respect we should look at the operation of



discourse not as an act of censorship, but as an act of meaning creation; the absence of the Catholic Church and the centrality of Calvinism serve a positive, rather than a negative function. This approach is indicated by Foucault's (1972) account of the fourth level of discursive formations, the formation of strategies, in particular, his account of a discourse's *points of diffraction*: 'These points are characterized in the first instance as *points of incompatibility*: two objects, or two types of enunciation, or two concepts may appear, in the same discursive formation, without being able to enter - under pain of manifest contradiction or inconsequence - the same series of statements' (p. 65). In other words, the lack of an account of the Catholic Church should not be understood as the indication of a failure in the documentary's historical narrative, but as an indication that there exists in any discourse a series of possible alternatives between which a discourse chooses according to particular strategies. As we saw earlier in the chapter, according to Foucault these theoretical choices are dependent on 'the *function* that the discourse under study must carry out in a *field of non-discursive practices*' (p. 68). I argued in the previous chapter, and will continue to argue here, that the documentaries produced by the first Committee operated in a field whose project was specifically tied to the 'national interest', that the final point of reference for each documentary is the nation itself.

How does this final point of reference illuminate the section under discussion? I am arguing that from a series of possible alternatives, one particular set of statements appears in the documentary, and that particular set of statements appears by virtue of the documentary's non-discursive function, and that non-discursive function is to contribute to the reproduction of a Scottish national interest which in 1938 was defined as a specifically national project, the reproduction in Scottish subjects of a sense of national citizenship. To produce a series of statements on the Catholic Church would be to challenge that national project. Firstly, because the Catholic Church is quite explicitly not a *national* 'tradition' or institution; it is Roman, English and Irish as much as it is Scottish, and is therefore part of an *international* history of political influence and cultural migration. Secondly, because allowing the Protestant Church and the Catholic Church to appear in the same series of statements would be to produce a history of national division rather than of national



cohesion, of a country split between two sets of beliefs, in some cases a country ruptured by sectarianism. This is not to argue that statements about the two churches could never appear side by side in the same discourse, the determining factor is the non-discursive function the discourse serves at any particular time. For this particular documentary then, the discourse of history is engaged in the strategic production of a specifically and exclusively *national* history. To explore this more fully, it is instructive to turn to the next section of the documentary, reached by a simple rhetorical strategy, on that other 'national institution', education.

### **Invented Traditions**

#### **Section Six**

65. MS boy writing in book

66. CU boy writing in book

67. Pan hillside to building

68. CU boy's face

69. CU boy's face

70. MS schoolhouse interior

71. LS large house

72. LS houses in village street

73. LS pan up university spire

74. LS university dome

75. LS students in lecture hall

76. MS boy reading

77. MS ditto

78. LS students in lecture hall

79. MS student in window

80. MS statue of Scott

81. MS operating room

82. MS operating room

Perhaps Scotland's most important debt to the church is her education system. John Knox's *Book of Discipline*, codified in 1560, and the constant energy and initiative of the Kirk sessions, instituted a wide system of parish and grammar schools.

"The schools shall be open from the time scholars can see to read in the morning till 12 o'clock noon, and from one o'clock till the night fall at night."

These schools gave equal instruction to the children of the rich and poor alike. From the smallest and the most obscure villages came the constant stream of young men to the great Scots universities; St. Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh.

The tradition here, like that of the crofts from which they came, was one of hard and ceaseless toil. Many starved their bodies to feed their minds. They studied through long winter nights, in fireless, unfurnished, dimly lit garrets. The qualifications for success were not money and means, but brains and industry. Thus Scotland bred great philosophers like Reid and Hume, poets like Dunbar, writers like Scott and Stevenson, Lister, who established the principles of antiseptis, and a legion of others.

The previous chapter examined the extent to which education, in the narrower (institutional) and wider (cultural) sense, operates as an instrument of citizenship. And here again we can see how this is understood by the discourse of history as both a



democratic right, 'These schools gave equal instruction to the children of the rich and poor alike'; and an institutionalised obligation, a system of proscribed and regulated behaviour, "The schools shall be open from the time scholars can see to read in the morning till 12 o'clock noon, and from one o'clock till the night fall at night". But the discourse also reproduces a fundamental difference between the management of the instrument of religion and that of education, a difference that is part of the more general shift identified in the previous chapter where public order becomes transformed into a question of public culture. In this instance, while the Kirk regulated the behaviour of the nation's subjects through a strategy of compulsion, summons, and punishment according to a divine religious code, the schools and universities regulated the behaviour of their subjects through a strategy of exemplary behaviour and self-management according to the 'great tradition' we noted in our discussion of *The Children's Story*. This tradition has two key components, the first of which is the production of an official educational canon of national cultural icons who contributed to that tradition, embody that tradition, and as part of that tradition must be studied themselves; 'Thus Scotland bred great philosophers like Reid and Hume, poets like Dunbar, writers like Scott and Stevenson, Lister, who established the principles of antiseptis, and a legion of others'. The second is the invention of a tradition of a national work ethic; 'The tradition here, like that of the crofts from which they came, was one of hard and ceaseless toil.'<sup>6</sup>

In this respect, in its construction of a specifically national educational system, the documentary's employment of the discourse of history might be understood as the 'invention' of a tradition. This concept is taken from the work of Eric Hobsbawm (1983a):

'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past. (p. 1)

My argument is that this is precisely what is going on in this documentary. A work ethic is invented and then found to exist not only in an array of Scots writers, thinkers and

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<sup>6</sup>Education's management of the subject operates according to the modern concept of power outlined in the previous chapter. Here, the body is subjected to a self-regulating 'economy of suspended rights' (Foucault, 1979, p. 11).

scientists dating back to Knox, but also in the 'crofts from which they came'. This is not to dispute the existence of, for instance, the Protestant work ethic, but to draw attention to the way in which the documentary's employment of the discourse of history transforms a series of historical features into a long standing national tradition, the Scottish work ethic. This ethic is governed both from above according to a set of prescribed rules, and by the self according to a set of ethical principles. The work ethic becomes ritualised not by annual ceremonies and public festivals, but by institutionalisation, in the timetables and calendars of the church and education, and by publication, from oral sermons to filmed documentaries.

Fundamentally, this is a private tradition, centred on the body, a dialogue with the self, but it is at the same time national and public, a constituent part of Scottish citizenship. The fact that this is constructed as a specifically national tradition accords with Hobsbawm's (1983b) central observation about 'invented traditions'; that they were 'mass-produced' during a particular period, 1870-1914, in a convergence of state, nation and society.

Quite new, or old but dramatically transformed, social groups, environments and social contexts called for new devices to ensure or express social cohesion and identity and to structure social relations. At the same time a changing society made the traditional forms of ruling by states and social or political hierarchies more difficult or even impracticable. This required new methods of ruling or establishing bonds of loyalty. (p. 263)

One of the ways in which the state establishes bonds of loyalty amongst its citizens is by inventing and legitimising national traditions that symbolise the cohesiveness of the national group. My contention is that these not only include prescribed public holidays and festivals such as Hogmanay and Burns Night, but also extend to what I am calling the more 'private' traditions that form part of our internal ethical sphere, part of what Foucault refers to as 'technologies of the self'. The final point that should be made about this tradition is that it compliments the melancholic trope discussed above, the university residences replacing the farmland as a site of hardship and endurance.



## Art as a Discursive Practice

### Section Seven

- 83. MS model of steam engine
- 84. CU model
- 85. CU model
- 86. MS furnace
- 87-8. LS tanker on river
- 89-90. LS ship construction
- 91-93. MS ship launches
- 94-96. LS cruiser with tugs
- 97. LS cruiser under bridge
- 98-99. MS machinery
- 100. MS men and machinery
- 101. MS men working furnace
- 102. CU etching of old town
- 103. MS smoke stack
- 104. LS aerial view of factory
- 105-6. LS men at shipyard
- 107. XLS houses
- 108. LS houses

At the end of the 18th century, James Watt of Greenock perfected the rotary steam engine and so released the mineral wealth of the Central area of Scotland. The Clyde was dredged and widened, Clydebank became the world's shipyard.

One ship out of every five that sails the seas is built on the Clyde. Round the Clyde thundered the new industries; heavy engineering, steel works, forges, foundries, machine shops. From Forth to Clyde the face of the country was utterly changed.

The new industries sucked in manpower from every part of Scotland, four fifths of the population was concentrated in this narrow area.

The documentary's shift from Scottish education to industrialisation and urbanisation turns on the figure of James Watt; Watt is the final player on the previous section's list of Scottish historical figures on the educational canon, and it is Watt's rotary steam engine that 'releases' the tide of industrialisation that is the following section's subject. This rhetorical pivoting is crucial because it allows the documentary to shift between different domains of knowledge while both remaining conceptually coherent and retaining the overarching project of constructing a national historical narrative. But this shift is not only a shift in subject matter, it is also a shift in aesthetics, manifest in the way in which the sound track is accompanied by a rhythmic montage of images of furnaces, tankers, ships under construction, ship launches, industrial machinery, and men working machinery and furnaces. Colin McArthur, as I noted in Chapter Two, refers to this representation of Clydebank as 'the world's shipyard', and the Central Belt as a site of modern industrial activity, as the discourse of 'Scotland on the Move'. In discussing McArthur's argument I noted that what is lacking in this account is any recognition of the relationship between particular features of this 'discourse' and those of other cultural formations at other times and at other places.

In European art, the movement that arguably provided the earliest and most influential 'response' to industrialisation was Futurism. The Futurists' subject matter was the mechanisation and dynamism of the industrial and urban environment, they celebrated industrial products above classical works of art for what they referred to as the new 'beauty of speed'. 'A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes; like serpents of explosive breath - a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot is more beautiful than *The Victory of Samothrace*', wrote Marinetti in the first Futurist Manifesto, published in 1909. In their subject matter and in their tenor there is an interesting correspondence between the Futurists and the 1938 documentaries celebration of industrialisation. Compare the following extracts:

[W]e will sing of the vibrant nightly fervour of arsenals and shipyards blazing with violent electric moons; greedy railway stations that devour smoke-plumed serpents; factories hung on clouds by the crooked lines of their smoke; bridges that stride the rivers like giant gymnasts, flashing in the sun with a glitter of knives; adventurous steamers that sniff the horizon; deep-chested locomotives whose wheels paw the tracks like the hooves of enormous steel horses bridled by tubing; and the sleek flight of planes whose propellers chatter in the wind like banners and seem to cheer like an enthusiastic crowd. (Marinetti, 1973, p. 22)

Round the Clyde thundered the new industries; heavy engineering, steel works, forges, foundries, machine shops. [...] The new industries sucked in manpower from every part of Scotland. (*The Face of Scotland*)

If the world wanted castings, forges and bridges, locomotives, ships, Scotland had the materials and the men to supply the world's needs. (*Wealth of a Nation*)

Both cultural formations depict the same field of objects; bridges, locomotives, and ships; the processes and products of heavy engineering. For the Futurists this constituted an explicit shift in the 'proper' subject of art, from the landscape, rural and agricultural scenes that had been the dominant subject of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists, to the urban, industrial environment of the modern city. Conceptually, Futurism and the Scottish documentaries also share common features. In particular it is notable that the products of heavy industry become the 'heroes' of the narrative of industrialisation. Industrial processes and products become animated; industrial plants vibrate, thunder and swallow, automobiles roar, and locomotives are described as 'enormous steel horses'. The troping is both animalistic and diabolical.



This is not to produce a form of art history, but to argue that the production of knowledge is distributed across a variety of institutions and discourses. As Foucault suggests, we have much to gain from considering cultural formations outside the epistemological domain, including that of art (Foucault, 1972, p. 192). The emergence of industrialisation as an object of artistic discourse had its own conditions of existence within a more general reorientation that took place in artistic production around the mid-nineteenth century. The work of the Barbizon School, Gustave Courbet and later Edward Manet, had shocked the Art establishment by asserting that the function of art was to represent the real world of ordinary things. This shift was not limited to painting, but was felt across the entire cultural sphere, particularly in poetry and literature, and was later to make itself felt in film in the work of Russian filmmakers like Eisenstein, Turin, and Dziga Vertov, in the films of Robert Flaherty, and subsequently in British documentary. The history of the artistic response to industrialisation is not however a history of continual aesthetic development and refinement, it is a history of breaks and ruptures, a history of discontinuity.

Aesthetically, Futurist paintings and the FoS documentaries forge an artistic style that captures the speed and power of the subjects they wanted to celebrate in a manner which breaks with any stable sense of space and time. Futurist artists such as Umberto Boccioni and Giacomo Balla fused the fragmentation of form found in the work of Cubists Robert Delaunay and Ferdinand Leger (Lynton, 1980, p. 87), with developments in chronophotography to reproduce the perceptual dynamics of locomotives and motor cars. Similarly, the documentaries employ a rhythmic montage of images of furnaces, tankers, ships under construction, ship launches, industrial machinery, and men working machinery to suggest the energy and power of the industrial process. David Harvey (1995) has argued that the crises of capitalist overaccumulation that swept the world in 1847-8 'created a crisis of representation, and that this latter crisis itself derived from a radical readjustment in the sense of time and space in economic, political, and cultural life' (pp. 260-1). As Marinetti put it in 1909, 'Time and space died yesterday. We already live in the absolute, because we have already created eternal, omnipresent speed' (pp. 21-2). What this suggests is that the artistic techniques of Futurism and montage were part of a cultural formation,

generally referred to as modernism, which made possible the reconsideration and reconceptualisation, and therefore the production of 'new' statements about space and time. Under modernism, space is no longer necessarily stable, unified, contained, and time is no longer necessarily linear, chronological.

But if all these can be read, as Harvey argues they can, as 'signals of a radical break of cultural sentiment that reflected a profound questioning of the meaning of space and place, of present, past and future in a world of insecurity and rapidly expanding spatial horizons' (p. 263), then what of the 'spatial horizon' and temporal narrative of the nation? Marinetti declared that the Futurists wanted 'to free this land from its smelly gangrene of professors, archaeologists, *ciceroni* and antiquarianisms' (Marinetti, p. 22). This celebration of thrusting industrialisation poses a threat to what I am arguing is the controlling thematic or non-discursive project of *The Face of Scotland*, if not all the 1938 documentaries. The documentary is explicitly aware of the magnitude of this shift from traditional to modern. The narration describes how 'From Forth to Clyde the face of the country was utterly changed' as 'The new industries sucked in manpower from every part of Scotland,' visually expressed by the contrasting images of an etching of a pre-industrial town followed by shots of smoke stacks and industrial plants. How different a world this is from the crofter's life in the barren Highlands we saw earlier. Doesn't this contradict the image of Scotland the text has meticulously constructed?

For both the Futurists and the documentaries, industrialisation is a specifically national phenomenon. The Futurists were profoundly nationalistic. In the first manifesto Marinetti declares that: 'It is from Italy that we launch through the world this violently upsetting incendiary manifesto of ours' (p. 22), while their 1910 manifesto is addressed 'to the young artists of Italy' (Boccioni et al., 1973, p. 24). Werner Haftmann (1965) describes how the Futurists' 'cultural propaganda was supplemented by political propaganda, which glorified Italy and Italian imperialism, and called for war against Austria' (p. 106). While the FoS documentaries are not nationalistic in the strictly political sense (they are not a call for Scotland to become a fully autonomous nation-state), an emphasis on the nation also structures *The Face of Scotland's* representation of industrialisation, which becomes a



specifically Scottish phenomenon: 'James Watt of Greenock perfected the rotary steam engine and so released the mineral wealth of the Central area of Scotland', Clydeside becomes 'the world's shipyard', 'the Yukon of Scotland', 'pioneer industrial area of the modern world'. Further, as if in response to the threat to Scottish national identity that this section of the film poses, the following section once more manufactures and foregrounds the historical, ethnic continuity of the Scottish people.

## **The Discourse of Nationhood**

### **Section Eight**

109. LS croft ruins	But these people, crowded together in the smoke and sound of the drumming factories were of the same stock as the crofters, the shepherds and the fishermen.
110. LS corner of city street	
111. MS men in pub	
112. CU two men in pub	
[Dissolve]	
113. LS croft ruins [Dissolve]	Behind every Glasgow family, they say, you will find a croft, a farm, or a fishing village.
114. MS barman pours whisky	
115. CU two men at bar	
[Dissolve]	
116. MS croft ruins [Dissolve]	
117. MS men in bar	"...pleased to see them winning the cup. It's the first time a second division team won the cup."
118. MS two riveters	
119. MS five riveters	The Scottish industrial workers still have the best qualities of the peasant, the same hardihood, the same ability. They were inventive, they made new things, they improved on them. In engineering shop and shipyard they bred great craftsmen.
120. MS men work machinery	
121. CU hot steel on rollers	
122. MS men work machinery	
123. MS two welders	
124-6. MS men in bar	

In this section it is no longer clear, to use Foucault's (1972) definition, that 'between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity' (p. 38). Consequently, one cannot argue of this section, as I have done of previous sections, that it is operating largely within the discursive formations of either history or ethnography. Firstly, this section moves beyond the limits of the thresholds of these two discourses. In terms of the formation of enunciative modalities, this section contains two forms of statement hitherto unencountered; reported speech, 'Behind every Glasgow family, they say, you will find a croft, a farm, or a fishing village', and dialogue, "...pleased to see them winning the cup. It's the first time a second division team won the cup". In other words, two new sets of voices are recorded the right to speak. Secondly, it is unclear

who these speaking voices are, from which institutional site they make their discourse (the pub?), and what position they occupy in relation to the objects of their discourse. In other words, it is not at all clear that they are using the sort of language (*langage*) that we have encountered so far in the documentary. We might suggest that these statements are not 'those types of speech acts which are divorced from the local situation of assertion and from the shared everyday background so as to constitute a relatively autonomous realm' (Dreyfus & Rabinow, p. 48), and that these are precisely the sort of statements that, according to Drefus and Rabinow, Foucault is *not* interested in, that they belong to the realm of ordinary speech relying only on the rules of 'common sense'.

However, this distinction is not as straightforward as it might appear. As I argued in the introduction to this chapter, Drefus and Rabinow are sceptical as to 'just how autonomous' Foucault's discourses are, particularly as Foucault himself 'claims that our culture has a tendency to convert more and more of our everyday speech acts into serious ones' (p. 48), and I suggested that this could be seen as one of the key features of actuality programming and reporting in the media in general. Nevertheless, I want to argue that the discourse employed in this section is *of a different order* than those employed in previous sections.

At the first level of discourse, the object that is produced is simultaneously *both* the past and a cultural group. The discursively ambiguous nature of this section is indicated by the way in which it shifts between three general spaces; rural crofts, a city pub, and industrial sites. The crofts are silent, in ruins, a gravestone the only sign of the departed human population. The pub and industrial site are noisy, busy and active. The first space is a place of the past, the second and third are places of the present. While the contrast between rural past and industrial present seems absolute, the narration argues otherwise; 'these people, crowded together in the smoke and sound of the drumming factories were of the same stock as the crofters, the shepherds and the fishermen'. The documentary constructs a continuity between these two spaces, a continuity of 'stock'.

I would argue that the compression of these two discourses, hitherto held apart, has the effect of producing a *hybrid* discourse, a discourse of *nationhood*. This is not a discourse



that derives its authority from epistemological institutions, rather, it is firmly located in both political discourse and in popular culture; it is no coincidence that this is the only place in the film to feature dialogue, and that this occurs in a pub. It is not a discursive formation in the strictly Foucaultian sense, although it appears to derive much of its 'way of seeing' from the two discourses discussed so far. Central to the discourse of nationhood in this instance is the concept of 'stock'. Stock is a loose or baggy concept, encompassing source, race and kindred; the crofters, shepherds and fishermen, thrown together as a homogeneous pre-industrial group, are the source of the Scottish race, and therefore the kindred of that other homogeneous group, the 'Scottish industrial workers'. Similarly, the effect of dissolving, rather than cutting, between the images of the croft ruins and the men in the pub is to assert a continuity between the two sets of images, as a dissolve allows both images to appear on the screen simultaneously (it is notable that this is the only time in the film that a series of dissolves are used).

The use of the epistemologically vague concept of 'stock' here repeats the elision of the difference between race, nationality and culture noted in the second section of the documentary's description of 'The land that bred a stern and hardy race'. It is my contention that this is not an isolated example, limited to this documentary, but is in fact a recurrent feature of a peculiarly British discourse of nationhood. The early manifestations of this discourse are pursued in the following chapter, but here I want to suggest, drawing on Paul Gilroy's (1987) work, that this discourse has continued to manifest itself in the second half of this century. Discussing what he calls 'the new racism', Gilroy argues that:

The politics of race in this country is fired by conceptions of national belonging and homogeneity which not only blur the distinction between 'race' and nation, but rely on that very ambiguity for their effect. Phrases like 'the island race' and 'the bulldog breed' vividly convey the manner in which this nation is represented in terms which are simultaneously biological and cultural. (p. 45)

We can see this conceptual simultaneity in the documentary's attempt to construct a continuity of 'Scottish character': 'Behind every Glasgow family, they say, you will find a croft, a farm, or a fishing village'; 'The Scottish industrial workers still have the best qualities of the peasant, the same hardihood, the same ability'. The first statement is biological, suggesting a generational inheritance; these people are of the same blood. The



second statement is cultural, reproducing both the troping, and the invention of a national tradition that we discussed earlier. Gilroy refers to this conception of culture and identity as 'ethnic absolutism', arguing that 'for contemporary Britain, the limits of nation coincide with those of race' (p. 59). One consequence of this ethnically absolutist discourse is its production of a particular version of Scottish history. And the 'flip-side' of the creation of a Scottish national character moving through calendrical time is the elision of particular moments and particular people in that history.<sup>7</sup>

But the intention of the foregoing discussion is not to argue that the documentary should be seen as failing in its production of knowledge about Scotland, it is not a question of whether it is right or wrong. Instead, we need to ask the question of why this history was considered to be of importance to the general population of Scotland in the first place. I have been arguing that the documentary's production of a specifically *national* cultural type needs to be understood in terms of what Philip Schlesinger (1991) has referred to as 'the special role of cultural producers as active constructors of national identity' (p. 174). In the construction and maintenance of national identity, he argues, 'history' and 'memory' play a key role:

The elaboration of national identity is a chronic process. Of considerable importance is the relationship between the present of a national collectivity and its past. That relationship should be understood, at least in part, as an imaginary one, mediated by the continual, selective reconstitution of 'traditions' and of 'social memory'. These categories direct our attention to the role of cultural institutions and practices through which the chain of identity between past and present is forged. (p. 174)

It is partly this 'selective reconstitution' with which this and the previous chapter have been concerned. In particular, Schlesinger's notion of a 'chain of identity' is useful for understanding this pivotal section in the documentary, for it is at this moment, I am arguing, that the aural and visual tracks forge a crucial link in that chain, a link between the pre-industrial rural past, and the industrial present. In an essay on the exhibitionary space for which the documentaries were first intended, the 1938 Glasgow Empire Exhibition,

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<sup>7</sup>People erased from this history include the different ethnic groups that made up Scotland *before* the arrival of the Romans (cf. Smout, 1990, pp. 17-21).



Colin McArthur (1986) argues that the two halves of this chain present a fundamental 'contradiction' which the exhibition struggles to 'negotiate' (p. 122):

[S]uch is the force of the dialectic between uneven economic development and the assigned identity of Scotland as 'natural' and rural, that the discourse of the village (or ruralised town) has to enter into constant collision with the idea of Scotland as a dynamic, thrusting, modern industrial nation. This collision can be followed through virtually every aspect of the 1938 Glasgow Empire Exhibition and the meta-discourses (guide books, special issues of local newspapers, newsreels) which surround it. (pp. 125-7)

McArthur argues that this 'collision' is also 'present in the half-dozen or so documentary films specially made for the 1938 Exhibition through Films of Scotland and in the 20-year output of the post-war version of the same body' (p. 134, footnote).

However, there is a problem with this account, in that nowhere in the Exhibition material or the documentaries is this collision explicitly manifest. This is not to argue that these two 'moments' of Scottish history are not presented side by side, they clearly are. But where McArthur sees a collision 'which threatens to render individual Scots schizoid' (p. 130), the exhibition mediates and defuses this potential clash. According to a contemporary review in the *Glasgow Herald*, the exhibition 'mirrors the environment in which lie the roots of our race, a race which thrived on hardship and which, however widely it has spread itself over the world's surface, clings to its essential characteristics' (qtd. in McArthur, p. 129). If there is a collision, it is between two very different discourses: the academic discourse to which McArthur belongs discussed in Chapter Two,<sup>8</sup> and a common-sense discourse of nationhood which circulates in the exhibition and in *The Face of Scotland*. It is this discourse that is the subject of this and the following chapter.

## The Monopoly and Memory of Violence

### Section Nine

127. MS Mons Meg canon firing

128. MS soldiers on Edinburgh castle

129-131. LS regiments parade

In the great war, many of the soldiers who marched away behind the pipes and the drums, were the engineers, the riveters, the puddlers, the miners. They carried with them, to [inaudible] and to the Somme, the fighting traditions of

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<sup>8</sup>The 'schizoid' references in McArthur's argument reproduces a trope that Beveridge and Turnbull (1989, pp. 51-61) argue has dominated discussion of Scottish national identity.

132-133. LS piper in trenches	Bruce and Wallace, of [inaudible] and Gordan.
134. MS shrine on Castle	The shrine on the Castle Rock at Edinburgh, rises as an abiding memorial to the men who fell in the war, and to the multitudes of Scottish soldiers in past times; the adventurers who fought with [inaudible] or became admirals or generals in the service of the czars; the dead of Bannockburn and Culloden, of Lucknow and the Heights of Abraham.
135. MS shrine, interior	
136-7. CU shrine	
138. CU memorial book	

The discourse of nationhood forges another link in Schlesinger's 'chain of identity between past and present', this time between the industrial workers described in the previous section and the soldiers who fought in the great war. Again a tradition is invented, 'the fighting traditions of Bruce and Wallace', to reconfirm the continuity of this identity backwards across history. This is reinforced by the image track which cuts from scenes of regiments in full regalia parading around Edinburgh castle forecourt,<sup>9</sup> to archive footage of a piper walking across World War One trenches, undeterred by the surrounding sniper fire and general carnage. Scotland's military history is given a physical presence too; 'The shrine on the Castle Rock at Edinburgh, rises as an abiding memorial to the men who fell in the war, and to the multitudes of Scottish soldiers in past times [...] the dead of Bannockburn and Culloden'. Here again we see the symbolic work of identity formation. The shrine, part of the Scottish national war memorial, was not inaugurated until 1927, but through the narration it is given a symbolic significance that stretches back through Scottish history, it becomes part of a national narrative.

Given that the documentary was made in the year in which Hitler annexed Austria and Anti-Jewish legislation was enacted in Italy, it would be tempting to read the references to the hardiness of the Scot and the invention of a Scottish military tradition as propaganda for the coming war. But this would ignore the fact that this discourse of nationhood is not limited to the late 1930s, but is part of a more general apparatus. In his lecture 'Qu' est-ce qu'une nation?' Ernest Renan (1990) argues that the memory of *national* conflict and

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<sup>9</sup>From 1950 onwards, the spectacle of Scottish regiments parading across the Castle forecourt becomes enmeshed in a related invented tradition, the annual pageantry of the Edinburgh Tattoo.



suffering is essential for a nation to recognise itself as such. While the relationship between international conflict and the mobilisation of patriotism is well documented, Renan's emphasis is on a more sustained apparatus.

In its representation of Scotland's military history, and the invention of a specifically Scottish military tradition, *The Face of Scotland* is playing a part in the continual reproduction of a national history of international military conflict that elides the internal differences, for example, between the Wars of Independence and the Jacobite Rebellion, just as earlier we saw it elide sectarian differences in its history of Scottish religion. The goal of this reproduction and elision is the construction and maintenance of a sense of national identity. Further, in the modern world, it is nations that hold 'the formalised monopoly over the means of violence within their territories' (Giddens, 1987, p. 120). The nationalism, patriotism and militarism of *The Face of Scotland*, is also central to the new racism discussed by Gilroy. He argues that the new racism's 'novelty lies in the capacity to link discourses of patriotism, nationalism, xenophobia, Englishness, Britishness, militarism and gender difference into a complex system which gives 'race' its contemporary meaning. These themes combine to provide a definition of 'race' in terms of culture and identity' (p. 43). We suggested earlier that the battles and monuments of warfare were one of the key thematic choices of the discourse of popular history. Now we are in a better position to understand why this particular space, rather than others, has opened up.

## Legitimising the Nation

### Section Ten

139. MS Scottish flag

140. CU Scottish flag

141. LS plane taking off

142. LS electricity pylons

143. LS water pipe from dam

144. LS football crowd

145. LS football crowd

146. MS football crowd

147-156. CU football crowd

157. MS footballers playing

Whatever the future holds, Scotland may face it boldly, for her greatest asset is to be reckoned not in terms of money in banks, or capital investments in planted machinery, but in the character of her people.

So today, in the roar of a Glasgow football crowd, you may well observe the rigour and the enthusiasm, the ambition and the incomparable determination of the Scottish race.

- 158. MS football crowd
- 159. CU football crowd
- 160. MS footballers playing
- 161. MS football crowd
- 162. CU football crowd
- 163. MS footballers playing
- 164. MS football crowd
- 165. CU football crowd
- 166. MS footballer scores goal
- 167. LS crowd cheering
- 168. LS pan across Edinburgh

Today they are the same people of whom, nearly five hundred years ago, the historian Holinshed spoke:

"There unto, we find them to be courageous and hardy, offering themselves often unto the uttermost perils with great assurance. So that a man may pronounce nothing to be over-hard or past their power to perform."

[Fade]

Part of the discourse of nationhood is the repertoire of nationalist symbols, and this final section of the documentary opens with the Scottish standard and closes with Edinburgh castle. While both serve as symbolic rallying-points for the national community within the terms of the documentary's narrative, their symbolic *meaning* is by no means fixed. Eric Hobsbawm (1983a) argues that this is a general feature of nationalist symbols: 'The crucial element seems to have been the invention of emotionally and symbolically charged signs of club membership rather than the statues and objects of the club. Their significance lay precisely in their undefined universality' (p. 11). To 'undefined' I would have to add 'contested'. Edinburgh castle, a state owned tourist site, while widely recognised as an icon of both the city and of Scotland, has long been the subject of a symbolic struggle. For instance, McCrone, Morris, & Kiely (1995) note that 'since the Castle authorities, that is to say, the British army, installed in 1992 a bigger flagpole from which to fly an even bigger Union Flag, there has been adverse comment in the press about this uniquely Scottish icon appearing to give undue political support to the British Union' (p. 185).

As in the beginning, the film ends with the official voice of history, in this instance the sixteenth century historian Holinshed, confirming the truth of the knowledge produced by the film. But we must specify that the national identity produced by the documentary should be seen as only one possible *version* of national identity, the official, state-



sanctioned version. We might note, for instance, that the version of national identity the film constructs is overwhelmingly masculine; this is a discourse which finds little space for women. It is notable that aside from a marginalised presence in the pre-industrial ethnographic sections, women are absent in the documentary. According to the Glasgow Women and Film Collective (1984), the representational absence of women in the urban environment 'is encouraged by the separation of work and home that characterised the move to the city, the Industrial Revolution. This is in contrast to the rural where not only were home and work closely linked, but where women were also part of the labour force on the land as well as in the home' (p. 18). With the discourse of history's thematic choice of industry and the military as its chosen objects of study, women become, to use Sheila Rowbotham's phrase, 'hidden from history'. The documentary's version of national memory is a specifically masculine one.

Framed within the two symbols of nationhood are twenty three shots of a football match. Sporting contests are often a key space for articulations of cultural identity, and this is particularly true of Scotland and football (cf. Moorhouse, 1989; Giulianotti, 1993). But the focus of the camera's interest is not the match itself, it is seen only four times, and only local knowledge allows identification of the teams as they are not specified in the narration. The focus of the camera is the crowd, shot the majority of the time in close up. Why? Is this *The Face of Scotland*? We have encountered facial close-ups before in the earlier ethnographic sections of the documentary. The narration explicitly states that in the crowd can be seen the 'character' 'of the Scottish race'. It is the archaeology of this articulation between physiognomy, culture, race and nation that the next chapter will trace.

In the previous chapter I argued that one of the key roles of the 1938 documentaries was to attempt to establish notions of community, membership, belonging and participation, and that this is explicit in the Committee's primary aim of promoting, stimulating and encouraging the production of Scottish films of national interest. This is one of the ways in which the modern nation legitimates its own existence, through the mass mediated circulation of the discourse of nationhood. It produces what Giddens refers to as the 'moral component' of sovereignty, the discourse 'helps naturalise the recency and the contingency

of the nation-state through providing its myth of origin' (pp. 220-1). In this chapter I have attempted to demonstrate the way in which *The Face of Scotland* operates as part of this machinery. I have also argued that the documentary's production of knowledge about Scotland draws on two discursive formations, the discourse of history and the discourse of ethnography, and that the discourse of nationhood draws heavily on these two formations. Of particular importance is the notion of a national cultural type moving through history. The following chapter attempts to provide an archaeology of that concept.



## Chapter 5

### The Discursive Construction of Scotland as an Object

I argued in the previous chapters that we need to locate documentary film and representations of Scotland within the archives of knowledge on which they draw. In particular, I argued that *The Face of Scotland* occupies a space of representation opened up by the discursive formations of ethnography and history, and a discourse of nationhood. This chapter traces the formation of this space by looking at the earlier surfaces of emergence of these discourses, the objects they select, the subjects they produce, and the concepts they bring into play. It also begins to suggest the ways in which these discourses engage with the construction of cultural and national identities.

What this chapter also traces is the centrality of the *tour* to these surfaces. This is of importance to the thesis for two reasons. Firstly, although tourism features only briefly in the documentaries produced by the first Committee, travelogues make up the majority of the films produced by the second, as we noted in Chapter Three. Secondly, and more significantly, as we saw in the previous chapter the figure of the *traveller* (the legionnaire) was central to the structure of *The Face of Scotland* and the way in which Scotland was constituted as an *object* of knowledge approached from the outside, 'discovered' by an other culture. In other words, although institutionally FoS didn't think they were making travelogues, they did produce a space in which the figure of the traveller could appear. Indeed, without anticipating too much the detail of the argument to follow, we might suggest that in moving from the documentaries produced by the first committee to those produced by the second, we shift from the discourse of nationhood to that of travel, a shift from the legionnaire to the tourist.

Clearly it is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a full account of either tourism, nationalism, anthropology, or the discourse of history. Instead, this chapter looks at a number of specific examples where these discourses emerge, shift, and reform. Those texts are Martin Martin's *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* (1703), *National Genius and the Environment*, Books Seven and Eight of Johann Gottfried von Herder's *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784), Johnson and Boswell's

*Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775) and *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1785), and Thomas Cook's *Scottish Tourist Practical Directory* (1866). The logic of this selection will become clearer as the chapter progresses, but we might note here that firstly: the books of Martin, Johnson, and Boswell all re-emerge in the Films of Scotland travelogues, in the representation of Scotland they are texts with reproductive power; and secondly, all these books produce particular intersections of culture, history, and travel. Again, following Foucault, our method is archaeology rather than interpretation. We are not interested in some hypothetical latent meaning that lies behind these texts surfaces, but in the way that they constitute a particular practice of knowledge.

Until parliamentary union with England in 1707 Scotland traded directly with her European neighbours. T. C. Smout has documented how trade took place from burghs, communities in which merchants and tradesmen (immigrants as well as natives) were granted specific rights to support their purpose of internal and external trade. In the middle ages the main Scottish exports to the Low Countries were wool, hides, coal, salt and fish. Wine was the most regularly imported luxury, brought home by Scottish ships from the wine ports of France, Spain and Portugal. By the 18th century the Scottish west coast ports were competing with the older east-coast burghs, and the burghs became gateways to the European world. Equal trading opportunities with England, provided under the Union of 1707, provided access to a British foreign market vastly enlarged by imperial expansion in North America, India and the Caribbean. Merchants grew wealthy with the opening of new trades to North America, the West Indies and Russia, then to the export markets of France and Germany, and finally with the trade to India and China (Smout, 1990, pp. 153-60).

The production and consumption of material wealth was matched by the reproduction and circulation of the cultural wealth or mimetic capital of these countries. Mimetic capital is best described as a stockpile of representations, the images that matter, that merit the term capital, that achieve reproductive power. This 'capital' was commonly appropriated on what is known as 'The Grand Tour'. From the early 17th century onwards gentlemen's sons visited Europe to perfect the languages at first hand, to acquire the fashionable arts of



swordsmanship and equestrian skills and the gentler accomplishments of music and drawing. They visited Holland, Germany, France, and above all, Italy where they studied the remains of the classical world and the painting of the great masters. By the turn of the eighteenth century the studious Grand Tourists were joined by the sightseeing travellers, the forerunners of the modern tourist. From the medieval period then, Scottish merchants were caught up in a system of material exchange with other lands and other cultures. Scholars and travellers passed along these trade routes in search of mimetic capital. Not until the eighteenth century, however, did they journey to Scotland's own geographical margins, the Highlands and Islands.

## PART ONE: DESCRIBING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

### Exemplary Behaviour

Martin Martin's (1703) *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* was first published in 1703.<sup>1</sup> In the Preface to the book Martin, a native of Skye and tutor to the McLeods, makes two introductory notes about his subject:

The Inhabitants of these Islands do for the most part labour under the want of Knowledg of Letters, and other useful Arts and Sciences; notwithstanding which Defect, they seem to be better vers'd in the Book of Nature, than many that have greater Opportunities of Improvement. (p. xi)

The Inhabitants in general prefer Conveniency to Ornament both in their Houses and Apparel, and they rather satisfy than oppress Nature in their way of eating and drinking; and not a few among them have a natural Beauty, which excels any that has been drawn by the finest Appelles. (p. ix)

Within the dominant discourse for discussing the representation of Scotland, Martin's distinctions between 'Conveniency' and 'Ornament', natural and artificial beauty, the Book of Nature and Knowledge of Letters, would be seen as reproducing the classic polar opposition between core and periphery. Ian Spring (1990) for instance has argued that Martin's representation of the island and islanders in his *A Voyage to St Kilda* (1698) is 'a very early example of a tradition that has a notable pedigree in Scottish literature' (p. 157). This tradition, argues Spring, is 'the process of representation of the St Kildans as the 'other', as defined by Jack Goody's concept of the Grand Dichotomy or Colin McArthur's

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<sup>1</sup>At a number of points, I have replaced the letter *f* from the original with the letter *s* for ease of reading.

use of core/periphery theory; so that the native St Kildans, like all peripheral cultures, are represented as possessing the opposite characteristics of the representing, core culture' (p. 157).

I want to suggest however that there are certain problems with the core/periphery explanation. Firstly, the representing culture is in this case the 'peripheral culture' itself, and this is crucial because this is one source of Martin's authority to produce knowledge about the islands. Martin, the man of letters from Skye, is a complex figure within this representational structure. Problems with the application of the Grand Dichotomy arise when theorists reproduce the fixed consignment of cultures to one side or the other that the model is meant to describe. Secondly, as we shall see, Martin's system of distinction is more complex than the 'core/periphery' model allows, primarily because there are not two cultures in his account but three; the islanders, those 'that have greater Opportunities of Improvement', and classical Italy. Thirdly, theorists have argued that there are logistical problems with the application of the economic model of core/periphery to Scotland in general, and to the Highlands and Islands in particular (cf. McCrone, 1992, pp. 42-54)

Martin remarks that it has 'become customary in those of Quality to travel young into foreign Countries' (p. viii), yet those travellers remain ignorant of their own home and on returning are 'only loaded with superficial knowledge' (p. ix). Martin is referring to the 'Grand Tour', the seventeenth and eighteenth century practice where young men with large amounts of economic capital finished off their private education by accumulating cultural capital on a tour of the continent, particularly Italy. Martin is situating his own work both within and against this particular cultural practice, the 'prevalent' 'modern Itch after the Knowledge of foreign places' (p. iv). This indicates the type of position and practice the Western Isles are being placed in. They too are a 'foreign country' deserving of attention, but for the production of a different kind of knowledge than Europe's 'famous Libraries, stately Edifices, fine Statues, curious Paintings, late Fashions, new Dishes, new Tunes, new Dances, painted Beauties, and the like' (p. ix). The Western Isles, argues Martin, are a different kind of object; 'The Places here mention'd afford no such Entertainment' (p. ix).



One thing Martin suggests they may afford is an exemplary 'way of living' that, for instance, satisfies rather than oppresses Nature. Martin is clearly critical of what he sees as the superficiality, artificiality and excess of life outside the islands. Martin's admonishment of Europe's Edifices, Paintings, Fashions, Dishes and so on is similar to Rousseau's (1993) call in 1755: 'Let our pretenders to taste admire elsewhere the grandeur of palaces, the beauty of equipages, sumptuous furniture, the pomp of public entertainments, and all the refinements of luxury and effeminacy' (p. 42). Rousseau advised the citizens of the Republic of Geneva to look to its magistracy: 'Do not all its members set you an example of moderation, of simplicity of manners, of respect for the law, and of the most sincere harmony?' (p. 38). Similarly, Martin argues that it is in their manner that the islanders offer an exemplary way of living, their manner of engaging with their surroundings, not the material situation of those surroundings themselves. Martin's book should be seen not simply as a text, but as an apparatus, a manual that provides the necessary knowledge for exemplary behaviour, as well as the knowledge of Nature that those of 'Quality' lack. But this knowledge also serves another purpose.

### Worlding the Western Isles

Martin's book opens with a dedication addressed to the queen's husband, 'His Royal Highness Prince George of Denmark, Lord High Admiral of England and Ireland, and of all Her Majesty's Plantations, and Generalissimo of all her Majesty's Forces, & c.' (p. iii). In it, Martin, proposes that a stronger connection between the islands and the 'Imperial Seat' 'might render a considerable Accession of Strength and Riches to the Crown, as appears by a Scheme annexed to the following Treatise' (p. iv). These are rather curious speech acts, their formality suggesting that Martin is knowingly working to an established formula, a formula of legal obligation and administration. Stephen Greenblatt (1992) discusses a similar formula in Columbus's account of his arrival at the New World two hundred years earlier. This account, argues Greenblatt:

is an account of a series of speech acts: a proclamation (*pregon*) by which Columbus takes possession of the islands, followed by the giving of new names. These speech acts - *he tomado posesion, puse nombre* - are so familiar to us that it is difficult to find anything in them worth remarking, but we would do well to look at them more closely.

Here, and throughout the early discourse of the New World, the reassuring signs of administrative order - bureaucratic formulas already well established in a very large number of earlier military, diplomatic, and juridical encounters in Europe and Africa - are deceptive; consciously or unconsciously, they draw us away from a sense of all that is unsettling, unique, and terrible in the first European contacts with the peoples of America. (p. 54)

While there is nothing immediately unsettling or terrible about Martin's actions, and while there are differences between the formulas used by the two men, there are significant similarities. Columbus and Martin both enact a legal formula concerning property in the name of an imperial monarch. In 1492 in the Caribbean, 'the display of the royal standard in the first moments of Columbus's landfall marks the formality of the occasion and officially designates the sovereign on whose behalf his speech acts are performed' (Greenblatt, p. 55). In 1703, Martin dedicates the description of the Western Isles to Prince George, signing himself as 'Your Highness's most Humble and most Obedient Servant.' The substance of that legal ritual, in both cases, is the articulation of a relation between the 'texting' of a place (naming, describing), and the rights to exploit that property. In effect both travellers explicitly mobilise a relation between the islanders and the crown, between objects and subject, between textual knowledge and property, or more simply between knowledge and power.

Just as Columbus's speech acts appear to allow for the negotiation of a third party, 'no opposition was offered to me' (Columbus qtd. in Greenblatt, p. 52), so too Martin claims to speak for 'the Islanders described in the following sheets' (p. iii). Here again we can see a structural similarity between Martin's *Description* and colonial discourse. Gayatri Spivak (1990) argues that in the production of different kinds of texts, colonial discourse was engaged in what she refers to as 'the worlding of a world on a supposedly uninscribed territory' (p. 1). The imperialist project, she argues, 'had to assume that the earth that it territorialised was in fact previously uninscribed. So then a world, on a simple level of cartography, inscribed what was assumed. Now this worlding actually is also a texting, textualising, a making into art, a making into an object to be understood' (p. 1). Martin, like Columbus, claims to be writing in just such an uninscribed territory, and in his *Description* turn this territory into a text, a world that can be read.



In describing the islands, Martin presents to the addressee a terrain that, as he remarks, is stocked with exploitable riches; his *Description* provides the necessary knowledge for those riches to be exploited. We can see this in Martin's description of Lewis, where particular attention is paid to the potential for a fishing industry. Martin provides detailed descriptions of the size and location of harbours and bays, and catalogues the different species of fish that may be caught both offshore and inshore. The question for us is how Martin transforms this 'uninscribed territory' into an object that can be understood and exploited, in terms of the particular kinds of knowledge he reproduces.

Martin's first act is to establish his authority to produce this knowledge. As we have seen in the previous chapter, such knowledge for Foucault is usually acquired in relation to a particular institution, but it is not at all clear that Martin is qualified to speak by virtue of satisfying some criteria of competence laid down by any professional quality, simply because Martin is *not* speaking from an identifiable institutional site. But Martin does legitimate his discourse by locating it within a particular practice, the practice of documenting the islands themselves. He establishes his own right to speak by referring to previous attempts to document the isles, and the failures of those attempts. The 'antient Geographers [...] knew so little of them, that they neither agreed in their Name nor Number, [...] they were indeed touch'd by *Boethius*, Bishop *Lesly*, *Buchanan*, and *Johnston*, in their Histories of *Scotland*; but none of those Authors were ever there in Person' (p. vi). Martin's authority then, is derived from the fact that 'it is peculiar to those Isles, that they have never been describd till now, by any Man that was a Native of the Country, or had travel'd them' (p. iv). Martin, of course, is that man, since he narrates 'not only from the Authority of many of the Inhabitants, who are Persons of great Integrity, but likewise from my own particular Observation' (p. x); Martin is, to use a recent term, an indigenous ethnographer.

The principle objects of Martin's description, the Western Islands of Scotland, are broken down geographically. Each island provides a different object for observation, the outer limit of the object of Martin's discourse is the shore-line. In Martin's text each of the larger islands (as opposed to the 'inferiour adjacent' ones) is discussed according to a set



catalogue of items. His description of Lewis, which is structurally typical of his descriptions of all the other larger western islands, is divided up into the following areas in this order: origin and meaning of name, position in relation to the rest of the islands and the mainland, general geographical features, dimensions, shire and diocese. This is followed by a description of the climate and its effect on the islanders health, the soil and its uses, agriculture and agricultural methods, distilling activities and alcoholic effects, location and size of harbours, fish type, size, location and fishing techniques, native tales and customs, 'interesting' natural features such as springs that have 'curious effects', caves, forts, castles, cairns, detailed description of 'remarkable' stone structures and the natives explanation of them, livestock, trees, mammals, physiognomy of islanders, their health and local medicines, characteristic attitudes and pastimes. The catalogue illustrates the dispersion of objects of Martin's discourse. It is as if Martin exhausts all that could possibly be said about the island, thus frustrating the notion that he is working within a discourse with an identifiable domain.

However, Martin himself routinely establishes certain limits to his *Description*. He explains that he finds it enough to 'furnish my Observations, without accounting for the Reason and Way that those Simples produce them' (p. xiii). Foucault (1972) has argued that all discursive formations have such 'thresholds'; 'discourse finds a way of limiting its domain, of defining what it is talking about, of giving it the status of an object - and therefore of making it manifest, nameable, and describable' (p. 41). This threshold is partly determined by the discourse's mode of statement, which consigns a certain area of experience to the limbo of things about which it cannot speak. The threshold of Martin's discourse is therefore partly determined by the fact that its mode of statement is confined to observation.

The following extract from Martin's description of Lewis illustrates the enunciative modalities of his discourse :

THE Natives are generally ingenious and quick of Apprehension; they have a mechanical Genius, and several of both Sexes have a Gift of Poesy, and are able to form a Satire or Panegyrick *ex tempore*, without the Assistance of any stronger Liquor than Water to raise their Fancy. They are great Lovers of *Musick*; and when I was



there they gave an Account of eighteen Men who could play on the Violin pretty well, without being taught: They are still very hospitable, but the late Years of Scarcity brought them very low, and many of the poor people have died by Famine. The Inhabitants are very dextrous in the Exercises of Swimming, Archery, Vaulting, or Leaping, and are very stout and able Seamen; they will tug at the Oar all day long upon Bred and Water, and a Snufh of *Tobacco*. (p. 14)

The first thing to note is the recurrent use of the general pronoun; 'the natives', 'the inhabitants', 'they'. The discourse Martin is operating within is therefore one which conceives of identifiable collective groups distinguished by a range of characteristic features that ranges from their physical prowess, through their artistic activities, to their sensibility. Age, sex, social position, occupation, are homogenised for the purposes of constructing an island 'type'. We argued in the previous chapter that *The Face of Scotland* worked within a similar discourse, but that the cultural type in that instance was specifically a national one. The geographical space that defines the limits of the membership of the cultural group in Martin's text is far more limited in size.

Further regularities are manifest in Martin's description of the mode of subsistence of the islanders from Lewis:

THE Natives are very industrious, and undergo a great Fatigue by digging the Ground with Spades, and in most places they turn the Ground so digged upside down, and cover it with Sea-ware; and in this manner there are about 500 People employ'd daily for some months. This way of labouring is by them call'd *Timiy*; and certainly produces a greater Increase than digging or plowing otherwise. They have little Harrows with wooden Teeth in the first and second Rows, which break the Ground; and in the third Row they have rough Heath, which smooths it. This light Harrow is drawn by a Man having a strong Rope of Horse-hair across his Breast. (p. 3)

The description moves in the same paragraph from an observation about a general characteristic of 'the natives', their industry, to a description of agricultural method, *Timiy*, and a detailed description of the tools employed. Martin's discourse makes no conceptual distinction between the natives' sensibility and their methods of subsistence. They are related to each other not through an appeal to established theory or reasoned argument, but through a linguistic manoeuvre, in this case the use of the conjunction and the juxtaposition of the three observations within the same paragraph. There is something familiar to the modern reader about Martin's catalogue of objects, as if there is a modern equivalent of the type of cultural formation he is working within, albeit one that has undergone a series of

shifts, ruptures, transformations. The inhabitants of Lewis and their way of survival are presented in a symbiotic relationship, again in much the same way that the early inhabitants of Scotland were in *The Face of Scotland*, but there is a significant difference. Whereas with the 1938 documentary the emphasis was on the way that the inhabitants were acted upon by the environment ('the land that bred a stern and hardy race'), with Martin the emphasis is on the way that the inhabitants act upon the environment themselves. While the notion of a cultural type, the emphasis on physical labour, and the use of observation as the key mode of statement remain, at least two conceptual shifts have taken place between 1707 and 1938. Firstly, by 1938 the environment is understood to play a formative function in the production of the natives' sensibility, and secondly, the cultural group is now conceived as both national and racial.

In arguing that Martin's discourse employs observation and description as its mode of statement, I am suggesting that narrative as a form of statement is largely absent. Firstly, with the exception of the reference to recent famine, there is no sense of the islanders being caught up in the narrative of history. Secondly, although Martin occasionally appears in the text as a recipient of knowledge, he does not appear as the subject of the discourse; there is no sense of a journey taking place from island to island. Narrative only appears in the text when Martin relates tales of 'incredible' natural events, such as that of the great whale that overturned a fishing boat and devoured three of the crew, or when he describes the origins of local customs. Martin is careful to stand outside these stories, and mark these tales as originating from the islanders, and his comments suggest this is from a conviction that their incredibility might threaten the credibility of his own discourse, thus jeopardising his textual authority.

Often Martin will refrain from commenting on whether he believes these tales to be true or not, but sometimes he will relate something the islanders have told him, an explanation of a local custom or the significance of a man made monument, and then, while not rejecting outright the reading offered by the islanders, will take up an incredulous position in relation to it: 'Several other Stones are to be seen here in remote places, and some of them standing on one end. Some of the ignorant Vulgar say, they were Men by Inchantment



turn'd into Stones; and others say, they are Monuments of Persons of Note kill'd in Battel' (p. 9). Curiously, while Martin appears to lend his authority to the less fantastic reading of the stones, a reading similar to that of the shrine on the Castle rock at Edinburgh in *The Face of Scotland*, it is notable that he doesn't exclude the other reading from his discourse. In other words, although Martin's authority allows him to distinguish between true and false statements, it is not the veracity of a piece of knowledge which determines its inclusion. These fabulous tales, superstitions, customs and their interpretation satisfy, for Martin's purposes, some other criteria. It is as if Martin recognises that although they may be false, inaccurate, or absurd, they nevertheless serve a cultural function. Although this function is not explicit in Martin's work, in a different context it is explicitly theorised in the work of Johnson, Boswell, and Herder.

## **PART TWO: ACCULTURATION AND THE TOUR**

In 1773, Dr Samuel Johnson and James Boswell journeyed from Edinburgh up to Aberdeen and on to Inverness, down the Great Glen, and across to the Western Isles, before travelling back to Oban, Inverary, Loch Lomond, Glasgow, down to Boswell's family seat at Auchinleck, then back to Edinburgh. That certain parts of Scotland were now the destination of a growing body of travellers is supported by Boswell's (1965) comment on Loch Lomond that it 'is so well known by the accounts of other travellers, that it is unnecessary for me to attempt a description of it' (p. 407). Rapid improvements in transport in Scotland during the previous fifty years facilitated their travels in the Highlands (Butler, 1985, p. 374), but their journey to the Isles was an unusual one; Boswell refers to it as 'our curious expedition', and recounts how on mentioning it to Voltaire, 'He looked at me, as if I had talked of going to the North Pole' (p. 167). In 1773, there was no infrastructure for travellers in the Western Isles; Johnson (1965) remarks that 'In the Islands there are no roads, nor any marks by which a stranger may find his way' (p. 47), and that 'in countries so little frequented as the Islands, there are no houses where travellers are entertained for money. He that wanders about these wilds, either procures recommendations to those whose habitations lie near, or, when night or weariness come upon him, takes the chance of general hospitality' (p. 48). There were also no guide books,

and their route was provided by the minister of Calder, an acquaintance of Boswell's.

Why then, despite these considerable difficulties, was Johnson, to use Boswell's words, 'particularly desirous of seeing some of the Western Islands' (p. 169), and why was Boswell so keen to take him on this eighty three day journey? In the late eighteenth century, Scotland was becoming a desirable destination for the solitary Romantic traveller, but Johnson was no Romantic, describing MacPherson's *Fingal* as 'as gross an imposition as ever the world was troubled with' (qtd. in Boswell, p. 320), and as Boswell notes, 'his prejudice against Scotland was announced almost as soon as he began to appear in the world of letters' (p. 172). We are not interested in Johnson's opinion of Scotland, nor how he represents the Scots in the narrow sense of that word. But we are interested in the way in which travel through the Highlands and Islands of Scotland constitutes a cultural technology that provides space in which observations about national characteristics could be made, and the desire to travel there in the first place. The discussion of this technology is divided into four sections: the first continues to explore the theme of textual authority that was part of the analysis of *The Face of Scotland* and of Martin's *Description*, our interest is again in the strategies by which the writers claim their right to produce knowledge; the second section attempts to establish the discourses of travel within which Johnson and Boswell operate; the third discusses what Johnson sees as the pedagogical function of travel; while the fourth argues that for Boswell, travel is bound up with the problem of identity formation.

### Textual Authorisation

Boswell's *Tour* includes a facsimile of the title-page of his copy of Martin Martin's *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*. The title-page is inscribed: 'This very book accompanied Mr Johnson and me in our tour to the Hebrides in Autumn 1773' (between pp. xx & 1). Although there is no indication that Martin intended his book as a guide for travellers, this is how the two travellers use it, and their own accounts include explicit references to Martin. Johnson, for instance, remarks that 'In coasting *Sky*, [sic] we passed by the cavern in which it was the custom, as *Martin* relates, to catch birds by night, by



making a fire at the entrance. This practice is disused; for the birds, as is often known to happen, have changed their haunts' (p. 60). Similarly, Boswell concludes one passage with the statement: 'such are the observations which I made upon the island of Rasay, upon comparing it with the description given by Martin, whose book we had with us' (p. 273). For Boswell and Johnson, their visit of places is always to some extent pre-defined by Martin's own textual rendering of that place, and the meanings he read in them. Their encounters with the Western Isles, in common with all Western encounters with cultural difference (cf. Said, 1979, pp. 1-28), are always already mediated by prior texts.

Boswell's inscription also notes however, that 'This book is a very imperfect performance and he is erroneous as to many particulars' (between pp. xx & 1). For instance, Johnson, on Rasay, writes that: 'It is told by *Martin*, that at the death of the Lady of the Island, it has been here the custom to erect a cross. This we found not to be true. The stones that stand about the chapel at a small distance, some of which perhaps have crosses cut upon them, are believed to have been not funeral monuments, but the ancient boundaries of the sanctuary or consecrated ground' (p. 57). The same observation is repeated by Boswell (p. 270), the two accounts are thus mutually reinforcing. Furthermore, although the travellers did not carry a copy of Thomas Pennant's *Tour in Scotland* with them,<sup>2</sup> the naturalist visited Scotland in 1769 and 1772, they also position their accounts in relation to his. This repeats the act that Martin performs in his own preface; drawing attention to earlier descriptions of the region, and guaranteeing the authority of his own reading by criticising the inaccuracies in the others.

Establishing one's authority through this textual strategy is not exclusive to the three travellers. Stanley Fish (1980) argues that in the discourse of literary criticism 'a new interpretative strategy always makes its way in some relationship of opposition to the old, which has often marked out a negative space (of things that aren't done) from which it can emerge into respectability' (p. 349). This suggests that Boswell and Johnson write in a space that is already marked out; they must argue that their text adds or discovers

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<sup>2</sup>We can assume this from a remark Boswell makes (p. 238). Like Martin, Pennant is treated both as a source of information, and as a text in need of correction.



something new, for it to be of value to other members of the literary community. But this newness, as Fish suggests, depends on a 'differential relationship' to what has gone before; their text requires the existence of earlier texts for there to be a deficiency to remedy. However, Fish argues that each community or institution will authorise only a finite number of interpretative strategies; there is a core of agreement or set of rules concerning what may be written and what concepts may be employed. Fish argues that 'nowhere is this set of acceptable ways written down, but it is part of everyone's knowledge of what it means to be operating within that institution' (p. 343), as it is constituted at that point in time.<sup>3</sup>

We can see this institution in action in Johnson's explanation of the failings in Martin's *Description*:

*Martin* was a man not illiterate: he was an inhabitant of *Sky* [sic], and therefore was within reach of intelligence, and with no great difficulty might have visited the places which he undertakes to describe; yet with all his opportunities, he has often suffered himself to be deceived. He lived in the last century, when the chiefs of the clans had lost little of their original influence. [...] He might therefore have displayed a series of subordination and a form of government, which, in more luminous and improved regions, have been long forgotten, and have delighted his readers with many uncouth customs that are now disused, and wild opinions that prevail no longer. But he probably had not knowledge of the world sufficient to qualify him for judging what would deserve or gain the attention of mankind. The mode of life which was familiar to himself, he did not suppose unknown to others, nor imagined that he could give pleasure by telling that of which it was, in his little country, impossible to be ignorant. (pp. 57-8)

For Johnson, Martin has authority to speak about the islands because he lives there, but fails to fulfil his task because he lacks knowledge of the rest of the world that would inform him that island way of life was different, and therefore interesting. Although Johnson's judgement of Martin is incorrect, what is significant is that he repeats the same move made by Martin in the Preface to his own book. He constructs the distinctiveness of the 'mode of life' of the Western Isles by alluding to its difference from 'more luminous and improved regions'. Johnson has authority to speak about this other object not only because he went there, but because he possesses sufficient 'knowledge of the world', sufficient

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<sup>3</sup>Johnson's attempts to distance himself from this strategy, 'He was pleased to say, "You and I do not talk from books"' (p. 417), can be seen as another language game.



cultural capital, to recognise the distinctiveness of the other. Greenblatt (1992) has argued of travel literature in the Renaissance that it derives its discursive authority 'from a different source of wisdom than it would in other forms of poesis - not from an appeal to higher wisdom or social superiority but from a miming, by the elite, of the simple, direct, unfigured language of perception Montaigne and others attribute to servants' (p. 147). That Johnson's strategy is the opposite of this indicates the shifting, contingent nature of the discourse.

### Discourses of Travel

In this section I want to argue that in addition to their relation to Martin's text, Johnson and Boswell operated within two discourses of travel. In other words, if Martin failed to describe a forgotten series of subordination, disused customs, and abandoned opinions, how did Johnson know about them? Not from his own tour: 'We came thither too late to see what we expected, a people of peculiar appearance, and a system of antiquated life' (p. 51). Johnson dates this cultural transformation to the legal restrictions on Highland life after Culloden: 'Such is the effect of the late regulations, that a longer journey than to the Highlands must be taken by him whose curiosity pants for savage virtues and barbarous grandeur' (p. 51). But it is still unclear where, in 1773, he got the idea that such virtues and grandeur resided in the Isles at all, although Boswell's account of the role of Martin's *Description* in producing their desire to tour the Western Isles suggests an explanation:

Martin's Account of those islands had impressed us with a notion that we might there contemplate a system of life almost totally different from what we had been accustomed to see; and, to find simplicity and wildness, and all the circumstances of remote time or place, so near to our native great island, was an object within the reach of reasonable curiosity. Dr Johnson has said in his *Journey*, 'that he scarcely remembered how the wish to visit the Hebrides was excited'; but he told me, in summer, 1763, that his father put Martin's Account into his hands when he was very young, and that he was much pleased with it. (p. 34)

But Johnson's disappointment with the lack of 'otherness' in Martin's text suggests that their journey was not only already scripted by accounts of the Western Isles, but by two versions of the discourse of travel, versions that he and Boswell both operate within. Just as Martin positioned his *Description* both within and against the practice of the Grand Tour, so too are Boswell and Johnson's accounts penetrated by a host of classical

references and allusions. For instance, Johnson remarks of the Highland landscape that 'Of the hills many may be called with Homer's *Isa abundant in springs*' (p. 34); of the Highlanders that 'Like the Greeks in their unpolished state, described by Thucydides, the Highlanders, till lately, went always armed, and carried their weapons to visits, and to church' (p. 40); and at Raasay remarks: 'Without is the rough ocean and the rocky land, the beating billows and the howling storm: within is plenty and elegance, beauty and gaiety, the song and the dance. In *Raasay*, if I could have found an Ulysses, I had fancied a *Phoeacia*' (p. 59).<sup>4</sup> Boswell, who had been on the Grand Tour from 1764 to 1766, compares the view of the Forth from Leith to that from Constantinople and Naples (p. 193).<sup>5</sup> These classical references can be partly understood as the display of cultural capital from the men of letters and law educated at Pembroke College, Oxford and the University of Edinburgh. But they also suggest that just as Martin's attempt to distinguish the Western Isles from the sites of the Grand Tour actually locates his own account within that cultural technology, so too these classical references demonstrate that Boswell and Johnson are working within the same established apparatus of travel.

While the account of the tour itself deploys these classical allusions, the account of the *expectations* of the tour operates with a different set of tropes: 'uncouth customs', 'simplicity and wildness', 'savage virtues and barbarous grandeur'. This troping does not belong to the language of the Grand Tour, but to an earlier period in travel literature, the accounts of voyages of discovery to far off lands. In his *Tour* Boswell refers to Cook's account of his voyage to the South Seas (p. 349), Alexander Drummond's *Travels* (p. 378), and Ramsay Chevalier's *Cyrus's Travels* (p. 246), and one evening Sir Eyre Coote entertains the travellers with narratives of his own travel through the East-Indies and the Arabian deserts (p. 238). Despite Johnson's embarrassment that on returning to Edinburgh 'We are addressed as if we had made a voyage to Nova Zembla, and suffered five persecutions in Japan' (p. 425), he argues that 'to the southern inhabitants of Scotland, the

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<sup>4</sup>Other instances occur on Rasay (p. 53), and at Glenelg (p. 43).

<sup>5</sup>Another instance occurs off the coast of Skye (p. 318).



state of the mountains and the islands is equally unknown with that of *Borneo* or *Sumatra*' (p. 79).

For example, both travellers' reproduce this discourse in their accounts of their arrival at Auchnasheal, 'a kind of rural village' of dry-stone huts in Inverness Shire. Accompanied by their Highland guides, who act as translators, they are presented with wooden dishes of milk; 'We had a considerable circle around us, men, women, and children, all McCraas, Lord Seaforth's people. Not one of them could speak English. I observed to Dr. Johnson, it was much the same as being with a tribe of Indians. - *Johnson*. "Yes, sir; but not so terrifying"' (Boswell, p. 250). This observation is followed by the giving of gifts, snuff, tobacco, wheat bread, and small coins, a re-staging of the actions of Europeans on their first encounters with inhabitants of the New World, an allusion curiously acknowledged by Boswell: 'There was great diversity in the faces of the circle around us: Some were as black and wild in their appearance as an American savages whatever' (p. 251).<sup>6</sup> Greenblatt has argued that wonder is 'the central figure in the initial European response to the New World, the decisive emotional and intellectual experience in the presence of radical difference' (p. 14). A radically different way of life perfectly describes what Boswell and Johnson sought, but failed to find in the Highlands and Islands.

The complexity of their relation to this discourse can be seen in Boswell's description of their 'discovery' of Inch Keith island just outside Edinburgh:

On approaching it, we first observed a high rocky shore. We coasted about, and put into a little bay on the North-west. We clambered up a very steep ascent, on which was very good grass, but rather a profusion of thistles. There were sixteen head of black cattle grazing upon the island. [...] Dr. Johnson afterwards bade me try to write a description of our discovering Inch Keith, in the usual style of travellers, describing fully every particular; stating the grounds on which we concluded that it must have once been inhabited, and introducing many sage reflections; and we should see how a thing might be covered in words, so as to induce people to come and survey it. All that was told might be true, but in reality there might be nothing to see. (p. 194)

A large proportion of Boswell and Johnson's accounts of their tour is written 'in the usual style of travellers' that Boswell describes here, a style that reproduces the discourse of the voyages of discovery with that of the Grand Tour. As Boswell suggests, that discourse

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<sup>6</sup>Johnson's account of this encounter is revealingly similar (pp. 36-7).

transforms the objects which it is applied to, in textualising them, in covering them in words, it adds a meaning to that place that 'induces' other travellers to come and see it. In particular, this textualisation manufactures cultural difference, a feature we return to in our discussion of Herder.

### Travel and Pedagogy

Nevertheless, for all its narrativity, it is clear from the *Journey* that for Johnson, travel primarily serves a pedagogical function:

It will very readily occur, that this uniformity of barrenness can afford very little amusement to the traveller; that it is easy to sit at home and conceive rocks and heath, and waterfalls; and that these journeys are useless labours, which neither impregnate the imagination, nor enlarge the understanding. It is true that of far the greater part of things, we must content ourselves with such knowledge as description may exhibit, or analogy supply; but it is true likewise, that these ideas are always incomplete, and that at least, till we have compared them with realities, we do not know them to be just. (p. 35)

For Johnson, travel offers the opportunity to empirically verify and expand our knowledge of the world, and then to reproduce that knowledge for a wider audience; As he had written elsewhere, the 'describer of distant regions is always welcomed as a man who has laboured for the pleasure of others, and who is able to enlarge our knowledge and rectify our opinions' (Johnson qtd. in Womack, 1989, p. 150).<sup>7</sup> Again, there is nothing new about Johnson's conception of the relation between travel and knowledge, particularly knowledge of the other. Not only have we already seen this relation in Martin, it can be traced back to Ancient Greece and what Greenblatt describes as 'the first great Western representation of otherness, Herodotus' *Histories*' (p. 122). Herodotus' *Histories*, argues Greenblatt, 'insisted upon the crucial importance of travel for an understanding of the world. Travel enables one to collect information, to verify rumours, to witness marvels, to distinguish between fables and truth' (p. 123). This is exactly the way Johnson uses travel, and the way he recommends others to use it (cf. Boswell, p. 332). Further, Greenblatt argues that Herodotus' work 'instituted certain key discursive principles': 'Travel in Herodotus is linked with the insistent claim to personal experience, the authority of the eyewitness',

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<sup>7</sup>Lord Hailes wrote to Boswell: 'I have received much pleasure and much instruction, from perusing "The Journey" to the Hebrides' (Hailes qtd. in Boswell, p. 434).



consequently 'we have to understand Herodotus' references to his travels less as an autobiographical fact than as a discursive choice' (p. 123). All of Johnson's statements about the objects encountered in the tour are empirically grounded in specific examples, either from Johnson's own observation, or from his inquiries made to the inhabitants themselves, and these examples then serve the basis for further analogy.

The subject of Johnson's 'narration' as he calls it, ranges from the height of mountains, the formation of river channels, local climate, and the dearth of wildfowl and vegetation, to the clan system, hereditary jurisdiction, the difficulties of legal administration, the effect of legal regulation of Highland culture after Culloden, Highland hospitality, the manufacture of Brogue shoes, the Erse language, distinctive features of Highland conversation, the origin of cairns, the diet of the Islanders, and the export of oxen from Skye to England. Physical geography, climate, social organisation, manufacturing, semantics. But this dispersion of objects is less haphazard than it first appears, as a letter from George Dempster reviewing the *Journey*', included by Boswell at the end of his account, suggests: 'The author neither says he is a Geographer, nor an Antiquarian, nor very learned in the History of Scotland, nor a Naturalist, nor a Fossilist. The manners of the people, and the face of the country, are all he attempts to describe, or seems to have thought of' (Dempster qtd. in Boswell, p. 436).

Although Johnson touches on these other disciplines, he does so only as far as they contribute to the conceptual category that unifies the objects of his inquiry. As Johnson remarks, 'We saw in every place, what we chiefly desired to know, the manners of the people' (p. 48). Johnson's interest is in, to use his terms, 'the mode of life' of the inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands, and what interests him about this mode of life is its difference, its otherness.<sup>8</sup> His description of this other culture bears comparison with that of Martin:

The corn of this island is but little. I saw the harvest of a small field. The women reaped the corn, and the men bound up the sheaves. The strokes of the sickle were

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<sup>8</sup>Boswell records that Johnson 'always said, that he was not come to Scotland to see fine places, of which there were enough in England; but wild objects, - mountains, - waterfalls, - peculiar manners; in short, things which he had not seen before' (p. 230).

timed by the modulation of the harvest song, in which all their voices were united. They accompany in the Highlands every action, which can be done in equal time, with an appropriated strain, which has, they say, not much meaning; but its effects are regularity and cheerfulness. The ancient proceleusmatick song, by which rowers of gallies were animated, may be supposed to have been of this kind. (pp. 55-6)

As in Martin's description of *Timiy* discussed above, Johnson describes the manner in which the 'natives' of the island Rasay subsist, sketching the particulars of an agricultural practice that he has observed. Like Martin, Johnson conceives the object of his enquiry as a coherent cultural group; they are described throughout his text as 'the Highlanders', 'Mountaineers', 'a warlike people', 'an ignorant and savage people', 'the Hebrideans', 'the Scots'. But there is a difference in the way Johnson conceptualises cultural groups. Whereas the notion of race doesn't appear in Martin, Johnson uses it in the plural, and like Herder (see below) suggests a multiplicity of races rather than four or five.

The inhabitants of mountains form distinct races, and are careful to preserve their genealogies. Men in a small district necessarily mingle blood by intermarriages, and combine at last into one family, with a common interest in the honour and disgrace of every individual. That begins that union of affections, and co-operation of endeavours, that constitute a clan. They who consider themselves as ennobled by their family, will think highly of their progenitors, and they who through successive generations live always together in the same place, will preserve local stories and hereditary prejudices. Thus every Highlander can talk of his ancestors, and recount the outrages which they suffered from the wicked inhabitants of the next valley. (p. 42)

Like Herder too, Johnson argues that racial distinction is partly the effect of geographically specific environment: 'such are the effects of habitation among mountains, and such were the qualities of the Highlanders, while their rocks secluded them from the rest of mankind, and kept them an unaltered and discriminated race' (p. 42). However, again like Herder, Johnson conceptualises race historically, arguing that the Highlanders 'are now losing their distinction, and hastening to mingle with the general community' (p. 42).

For Johnson too, inherited culture is as important as inherited environment, and he argues that in the Highlands and Islands, every member of a cultural group can retell local stories and the tales of outrages against their ancestors. On Skye, he hears a tale from an elderly piper about the Macdonalds of Glengary and records it in his book, arguing that 'Narrations like this, however uncertain, deserve the notice of the travellers, because they are the only records of a nation that has no historians, and afford the most genuine representation of the



life and character of the ancient Highlanders' (p. 44). When Flora Macdonald narrates the story of her part in the escape of Charles Edward Stuart, Boswell records that 'Dr. Johnson listened to her with placid attention, and said, "All this should be written down"; Boswell records the narrative in his own narrative of the tour (pp. 282-295). For Johnson, one function of travel as a discourse is that it can both preserve and reproduce the collective memory of the cultural group.

### **Travel and Identity**

For Boswell, the function of travel is rather different, it is bound up with feelings of belonging and identity. Further, it is with Boswell that the discourse of travel begins to incorporate not only the discourse of ethnography but also the discourse of history. Boswell's account, like that of Martin, features wondrous tales. Passing a lake on Rasay Boswell is told 'a strange fabulous tradition' of a wild sea-horse beast which devoured a man's daughter (p. 270), and on Coll he is told of a large rock that 'The tradition is, that a giant threw such another stone at his mistress, up to the top of a hill, at a small distance; and that she in return, threw this mass down to him' (p. 355). What is significant, is not only the way in which the discourse of travel provides a space for the retelling of the narratives of a culture, but the way in which that discourse fixes those tales at particular locations. To visit that location is to initiate the narrative in which it is embedded. Gordon Turnbull (1986) argues that for Boswell the history of the final Jacobite Rebellion is particularly significant, 'the text of this history seems to him inscribed on the very landscape through which he passes' (p. 230).

I saw Loch Modiat, into which the Prince entered on his first arrival, and within which is a lesser loch called Lochninaw, where the Prince actually landed. The hills around, or rather mountains, are black and wild in an uncommon degree. I gazed on them with much feeling. There was a rude grandeur that seemed like a consciousness of the royal enterprise, and a solemn dreariness as if a melancholy remembrance of its events had remained. (Boswell qtd. in Turnbull, p. 230)

We might argue instead that it is Boswell himself who is writing the history of the Rebellion onto the landscape in his published account. Just as he suggested at Inch Keith, he is covering Loch Moidart and the surrounding landscape with words that add meaning to the otherwise blank text of nature, words that reproduce the melancholy trope we

identified in *The Face of Scotland*. Johnson's tribute to Iona similarly articulates the narrative of history to a geographical site:

Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses; whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me and from my friends, be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. That man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of *Marathon*, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of *Iona*! (pp. 134-5)

Johnson's tribute explains the mechanics of Boswell's experience of Moidart and his own of Iona. Both sites are grounds which, by virtue of the events that have taken place on them, have become embedded in the narrative of these events. The traveller to these sites, reminded of that history by its reproduction, is, according to Johnson, transported from an immediate present to a recollection of that past. For Boswell and Johnson it is the events themselves that have transformed these sites and that transform visitors to them. My argument is that it is the reproduction of these sites within the discourse of history that produces the transformation. We shall return to this in the following chapter.

Boswell and Johnson both see their journey as the pursuit of their on-going 'inquiries' (Boswell, p. 370), a term which literally refers to the fact that a key mode of statement in their discourse is interrogation, the results which are 'evidence' (p. 192). Johnson obtains much of the evidence about the object of his inquiry, the way of life of the inhabitants of the regions travelled through, by extensively interviewing the inhabitants themselves, and this is foregrounded in both accounts. Boswell, the biographer, does not only interview Johnson on his past, he also encourages Johnson to discourse on particular subjects by 'leading the conversation': 'leading as one does in examining a witness, - starting topics, and making him pursue them' (p. 388). Boswell's technique is to use his legal experience at the Scottish bar to induce what in discursive terms amounts to a confession from Johnson.

However, although Boswell described Johnson as 'the capital object of the following journal' (p. 172),<sup>9</sup> his presence in the text is not only a consequence of Boswell's

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<sup>9</sup>The *Tour* pre-figures, and advertises Boswell's full biography of Johnson.



biographical intentions. Neither can Johnson's appearance in his own account be wholly explained as evidence of the discursive authority of the eye witness discussed by Greenblatt. Both accounts are partly composed of the author's narration of their experience of the tour itself. Mary Louise Pratt (1986) has argued that a central part of early travellers' accounts was both the description of the environment and the way of life of the 'natives'; 'By the early sixteenth century in Europe, it was conventional for travel accounts to consist of a combination of first-person narration, recounting one's trip, and description of the flora and fauna of the regions passed through and the manners and customs of the inhabitants' (p. 33). Both writers are working within this long established discourse. But there is a difference between the two.

Discussing Boswell's *London Journal*, Kenneth Simpson (1988) has argued that 'what is characteristic of Boswell in this is the sense both of the mind as receptor - rather than initiator - of experience and of the mind as self-observer' (p. 118). For instance, on Iona Boswell remarks that 'I hoped, that, ever after having been in this holy place, I should maintain an exemplary conduct. One has a strange propensity to fix upon some point of time from whence a better course of life may begin' (Boswell, p. 387). Similarly, Gordon Turnbull argues that Boswell's tour should be understood as part 'his much longer psychopolitical tour: he travels through the imaginative heartland of his lingering emotional attachment to an ancient independent Scotland - "Caledonia"' (p. 230). Turnbull argues that Boswell weaves the narrative of the Jacobite Rebellion in with his own narrative of the tour 'to provide a continuing interplay of national history and individual identity: the events on which Boswell quotes his informants are among those which have fashioned him as a political being' (p. 230). Within the technology of the tour then, the discourse of history is serving a rather particular function. On hearing the story of one participant in the battle of Culloden, Boswell moves into confessional mode:

As he narrated the particulars of that ill-advised, but brave attempt, I could not refrain from tears. There is a certain association of ideas in my mind upon that subject, by which I am strongly affected. The very Highland names, or the sound of the bagpipes, will stir my blood, and fill me with a mixture of melancholy and respect for courage; with pity for an unfortunate and superstitious regard for antiquity, and thoughtless inclination for war; in short, with a crowd of sensations with which sober rationality has nothing to do. (Boswell, p. 249)

Boswell described himself as 'a gentleman of ancient blood, the pride of which was his predominant passion' (p. 192). Tracing his genealogy, Boswell claims 'the blood of *Bruce* flows in my veins' (p. 175, footnote). The intention of this discussion is not to create a literary biography, but to suggest that for Boswell a key function of the tour was that it served as an apparatus for him to manage his identity, to fashion a sense of his self in relation to a historical past, to 'know myself' (p. 303), as he puts it.

### Inherited Culture

Boswell's nationalist sentiments, and the national narratives and effects of environment discussed by Johnson, receive extended consideration in Johann Gottfried von Herder's (1968) theory of national character. George Stocking (1982) argues that 'there was a strong organismic current in Herder, whose ambiguous heritage contributed heavily to both cultural and racial thought' (p. 65). Given that Herder's work played a central role in 'the biological and historical thought of the Romantic period' (p. 65), and in the development of (especially German) nationalism (cf. Hayes, 1927; Giddens, 1987), we will briefly consider it here.

Herder's theory has three propositions; firstly, that because everything is in flux, mankind is continuously changing; secondly, that while men appear externally similar, they are internally individually different; yet thirdly, that 'all mankind are only one and the same species' (Herder, 1968, p. 5). Herder therefore explicitly distinguishes himself from those that argued that the distinctions between human groups could be explained biologically in terms of race; 'Some for instance have thought fit, to employ the term of *races* for four or five divisions: but I see no reason for this appellation. Race refers to a difference in origin, which in this case either does not exist, or in each of these countries, and under each of these complexions, comprises the most different races' (p. 7). Herder's central argument is that the differences between groups of people operate at a national level, 'every nation is one people, having its own national form, as well as its own language' (p. 7), and that these national differences are the product of climate and culture:

And since man is no independent substance, but is connected with all the elements of nature; living by inspiration of the air, and deriving nutriment from the most opposite



productions of the Earth, in his meats and drinks; consuming fire, while he absorbs light, and contaminates the air he breathes; awake or asleep, in motion or at rest, contributing to the change of the universe; shall not he also be changed by it? (p. 4)

There is then an organic relationship between environment and the 'national genius' of a people. Herder's picture of the division of mankind into environmentally specific groups depends on a particular geographical structure, whereby 'the habitable land of our Earth is accumulated in regions, where most living beings act in the mode best adapted to them' (Herder, p. 18). For Herder, each geographical region is populated by a distinct collective group, a nation; 'climate does not force, but incline: it gives the imperceptible disposition, which strikes us indeed in the general view of the life and manners of indigenous nations' (p. 20). As Hayes argues, 'Not race but environment, not inherited blood but inherited culture, makes and emphasises national difference. This is Herder's capital idea' (p. 723). While we might identify aspects of this capital idea emerging in Martin's attribution of a symbiotic relationship between the geography of an island and its inhabitants, we witnessed its more complete manifestation in the early sections of *The Face of Scotland* in the previous chapter.

While Herder, like Johnson, differs from Martin in locating the collective group at the national level, his notion of what constitutes that national group, what he can legitimately talk about under the concept of 'national genius', is not that different from the way in which Martin contrasted, related, and classified the islander type, as this passage on the distinctiveness of the Bedouin illustrates:

With this his simple clothing, his maxims of life, his manners, and his character, are in unison; and, after the lapse of thousands of years, his tent still preserves the wisdom of his forefathers. A lover of liberty, he despises wealth and pleasure, is fleet in the course, a dextrous manager of his horse, of whom he is as careful as of himself, and equally dextrous in handling the javelin. His figure is lean and muscular; his complexion brown; his bones strong. He is indefatigable in supporting labour, bold and enterprising, faithful to his word, hospitable and magnanimous, and, connected with all his fellows by the desert, he makes one common cause with all. From the dangers of his mode of life he has imbibed wariness and shy mistrust; from his solitary abode, the feeling of revenge, friendship, enthusiasm and pride. (p. 8)

The terms 'national genius', nation, and *volk* are all supra-individual categories, referring to the 'character' of a nation that each member of that nation shares. Hayes notes that 'Herder uses the words *Volk* and *Nation* interchangeably' (p. 722, footnote), and this is precisely the

point. Again, this is the kind of ambiguity we noted in our discussion of *The Face of Scotland*, the same ambiguity that Gilroy argues structures the rhetoric of British nationalism. The grids of specification that national genius can be classified under are: habitat, clothing, philosophy, manners, character, dwelling, inherited knowledge, physical skills, physique, complexion, bone structure, affectations and volition. Herder draws a direct relation between 'mode of life' and emotional traits such as shyness and pride, and again this is similar to the action carried out by Martin. But there is a fundamental difference between the way the two writers conceive the collective group that marks a fundamental transformation in the discourse. Herder argues that the relation between national character and environment has a particular consequence for the relation between the member of a nation and their nation itself. Herder argues that a native of a country will fight for that country to the end, that if you separate a man from his country 'you deprive them of everything' (p.10); 'I cannot pass over those joyful scenes, when a stolen son of nature revisits his paternal shores, and is restored to the bosom of his country' (p. 13). The rhetoric of patriotism and homeland, so familiar to us in the twentieth century, that structures Herder's statements constitutes a major conceptual shift from Martin's description of cultural groups. For Herder, national groups are not only different, each individual member of such a group has an idea of and an investment in their membership of that group as a whole. In other words, the attachment that Herder conceives depends fundamentally on a sense of both self and collective *identity*. This is precisely the emotionally invested sense of identity we observed in Boswell.

We have suggested already that for Herder it is not only climate but culture that distinguishes human groups, but this too is partly determined by environment. Herder argues that cultural groups can only know what is within their own geographical sphere of perception, and as that sphere is national, culture is nationally specific; 'the ideas of every indigenous nation are thus confined to its own region' (p. 41). In arguing that the limits of culture are the geographical limits of the nation, Herder establishes the conceptual space for the notion of national culture. As part of this model, each nation has its own 'mode of representing things [...] because it is adapted to themselves, is suitable to their own earth



and sky, springs from their mode of living, and has been handed down to them from father to son' (p. 44). This notion of cultural inheritance includes popular songs (*Volkslieder*) and the stories a nation tells itself:

at present most national fictions spring from verbal communications, and are instilled into the ear. The ignorant child listens with curiosity to the tales. [...] They seem to him to explain what he has seen: to the youth they account for the way of life of his tribe, and stamp the renown of his ancestors: the man they introduce to the employment suited to his nation and climate, and thus they become inseparable from his whole life. (p. 45)

Thus Herder historicises national culture, it is inherited, passed down from generation to generation, and this inheritance includes national mythologies. We have seen that Martin thought the tales of the islanders worth relating, but it is in Boswell and Johnson that these mythologies were understood as central to the nation and its sense of its self. These national fictions re-emerge in *The Face of Scotland* and its construction and exhibition of a national memory for the present.

The raw material on which Herder based his theory was diverse. *National Genius and the Environment* refers to work in the fields of natural history, botany, physiology, climatology, pathology, and language, the work of the Ancient Greeks and of Rousseau. Again we might suggest, as we did of Martin, that the irregularity of this dispersion of objects, and circulation of concepts that characterises Herder's text suggests he is not working within an institutionalised discursive formation. Nevertheless, what we do see is the convergence of a number of features which will re-emerge in the discourses of anthropology and ethnography in the next century. But there is a further relation between Herder's work and both *The Face of Scotland* and the other writers discussed in this chapter, and that is the centrality of travel to his account. Herder's primary raw material were the accounts of travellers to India, Asia, Arabia, Greenland, Guinea, California, and the South Seas. It was these accounts that for Herder demonstrated the persistence of national *difference* across the globe.

### PART THREE: THE TECHNOLOGY OF TOURISM

Just a few years after Boswell and Johnson toured Scotland, two new types of tourists



appeared. The first of these was the picturesque tourist. As I noted in Chapter Two, William Gilpin toured Scotland in 1776, and his experiences and recommendations to future picturesque tourists were published in his *Observations, relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1776, on Several Parts of Great Britain; particularly the High-Lands of Scotland*. The second type of tourer, the English hunting gentleman, also possessed a high amount of economic capital. Again he had his own guide book, *A Sporting Tour Through the Northern Parts of England and Great Part of the Highlands of Scotland*, published in 1804 (Butler, 1985, p. 375).<sup>10</sup> Thornton and Gilpin's books were the first of many guide books to various tours in Scotland that appeared in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Roger Taylor (1981) notes that in the late eighteenth century, 'road books and itineraries had been published as indexes to the mail and stage coach routes which intersected Britain' (p. 55). Johnson appears to recognise the possibility that his *Journey* may be used as a travel guide when he recommends the Highlanders that accompanied him and Boswell from Inverness to Glenelg for 'the service of any future travellers' (Johnson, p. 43). Nevertheless, 'to the average individual, travel to the Highlands in the first half of the nineteenth century was still expensive, slow, and troublesome' (Butler, p. 377). This situation underwent a profound shift in the middle of the century with the expansion of the national railway network, virtually complete by 1863, and it was in Scotland that Thomas Cook devised and consolidated his excursion schemes.

In 1863, Cook (1866) recorded how he began his excursions into Scotland in 1846, taking a 'large party of Excursionists' to the Low Country: in 1847 he toured the Western Highlands and Islands, and in the following year the North East of Scotland. The tours continued for the next fourteen years, Cook opening offices in Edinburgh and Glasgow in 1861, until 1862 when the excursions were suspended, to be partially revived in 1864 and fully resumed in 1866 (Cook, pp. 109-129). Cook's earlier tours followed the established picturesque tours of Scotland that took in Edinburgh, the Trossachs, Loch Lomond, Loch Long, Loch Katrine, and Dunkeld, as well as the Highland Railway and the 'Royal Route' via Balmoral, and steamboat trips from Oban to Staffa and Iona. By 1870, Cook was

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<sup>10</sup>Deer stalking became a growth leisure activity in Scotland in the 1830s, its popularity stimulated by Edwin Landseer's paintings and the fact that Prince Albert took part in it on his visits to Scotland (Butler, p. 379).



offering what he significantly referred to as a 'Grand Tour' of the Western Islands, the Caledonian Canal, Inverness, Blair Athol, Killiecranke, Dunkeld, Perth, and Edinburgh. Cook claimed that together, 'These great tours embrace all the great outlines of Scottish Scenery, and with the deviations that may be made from them, are sufficient to constitute a tour of Scotland' (p. 3). He claimed that after twenty six years of these activities; 'I calculate that I have taken by special trains nearly 40,000 visitors to Scotland' (p. 113).

A contemporary article on 'The Excursion Season' (1853, October 29) in *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal* described how 'The midland excursions to the north, under Mr Cook's management, are really very curious and deserving of attention' (p. 280). Exactly what made these tours so 'curious'? People had been touring various parts of Scotland for over a hundred years before Cook's tours began, and by 1853 as the *Journal* suggests there were well established routes around Scotland ('The Excursion Season, p. 280). Further, Anne Gordon (1988) has argued of Scotland that 'much of the early passenger traffic on the railway was for leisure, particularly after the opening of branch lines, and weekends saw many a family party setting off by rail for picnics and outings' (p. 136). How was the guide book Cook published different from the guide books that began appearing in the 1830s that combined travel details with descriptions of places of interest, such as *The Scottish Tourist, and Itinerary* (1834), George Bradshaw's *Railway Guide* (1839), John Murray's first handbook to the Continent (1836), or Karl Baedeker's first guidebook to Holland and Belgium (1839)?

The shift in touring practices that Cook's work represented is partly revealed by the title of the guide he published to accompany the tourist to Scotland in 1861: *Cook's Scottish Tourist Practical Directory: A Guide to the Principle Tourist Routes, Conveyances, and Special Ticket Arrangements, sanctioned by Railway, Steamboat and Coach Companies, Commanding the Highland Excursion Traffic, By Thomas Cook, Tourist Manager, With a series of new sectional maps*. Cook described how he published the *Directory* 'with the view to explaining and promoting the System of Tours' (Preface). In short, Cook's *Directory* was more than a guide to a tourist destination, it was a guide to a whole system, and this system was directed not at individual travellers, but at Excursionists, supervised



groups ranging from forty to two hundred travelling together.<sup>11</sup> I will argue over the rest of this chapter that unlike the tours of earlier travellers such as Boswell and Johnson, we can describe Cook's excursions as a cultural technology.

A number of pages of the *Directory* are taken up with maps of Cook's Scottish tours (cf. pp. 14-15), with the 'Tourist lines', routes which 'form a belt of travelling arrangements encircling places and objects of great natural, classic and historical interest' (p. 33), indicated in red. As well as suggesting particular routes, the *Directory* brings together information from other guide books that describes those places and objects encountered on that route, often quoting them at length, and recommends 'local' guide books. But the *Directory* was more than just an annotated reader, its administrative and technological components meant it constituted a complete cultural technology:

The Compiler of this DIRECTORY disclaims all idea of invading the province of any existing Guide Book author; his aim has been a special one - to group the lines of tourist travel, give passing glimpses of objects and place of interest by the way, show the most practical and economical modes of travel, and issue Tickets for the conveyances that may be selected. (Preface)

While the number of existing guide books indicates the extent to which a supporting apparatus for the tourist in Scotland had developed by the mid 1860s, Cook's contribution was to turn this apparatus into a cultural technology for the masses. He opened up and facilitated the field of subjects who could operate within it; designed the tour, booked railway carriages, steamers and hotels, issued tickets, published a guide book for the tour, and accompanied the excursionists on the tour itself. Cook facilitated touring for the traveller by providing what *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal* referred to as 'tourist-tickets': 'Many tourists, wishing to go somewhere, but not knowing wither, would be thankful to any kind of persons who would point out how they could best see a wide range of beautiful country in a short time, and of reasonable expense' ('The Excursion Season', p. 279). By 1875, Anthony Trollope was able to describe in *The Prime Minister* how 'The travelling world had divided itself into Cookites and Hookites; - those who escaped trouble under the auspices of Mr. Cook, and those who boldly combated the extortions of foreign innkeepers

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<sup>11</sup>Cook argued that this 'United Travel' was one of the unique benefits of the Excursion system; 'It is a pleasant thing to travel together in social concord, and for each to aid his fellows in discerning objects of beauty and interest' (p. 113).



and the anti-Anglican tendencies of foreign railway officials "on their own hooks" (1973b, p. 250). As James Buzzard (1993) argues, Cook was responsible for 'the evolution of a co-ordinated, interlocking system of institutions and conventions extending out into the wide world to enable and shape tourist experience' (p. 49). Cook and his company functioned, to use Cook's own term, as 'tour managers', organising the deployment of a whole range of pre-existing cultural practices and developments in transportation and communication in the new field of mass tourism.

Cook's *Directory* is interspersed with references to famous Scots, previous Tourists, and historic events. There is mention of Johnson's *Journey*, Macbeth, Rob Roy, Mary Queen of Scots, MacPherson's *Ossian*, Sir Walter Scott, Burns, Byron, the American writer Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Sunny Memories*, the 1745 'adventures', and Queen Victoria's trips up Loch Long in 1847 and 1849. Part of the directory is therefore working with the mimetic capital in Scotland that is already established and marked out as such: 'Others have gone before us to describe the splendid scenery, and to mark the spots celebrated in classic story, immortalised by deeds of fame, and magnified by national melody and song' (Cook, p. 35). The tours visit those places embedded in this capital: 'the spirit of the "Lady of the Lake" seems to hover over the whole scene of resplendence' he writes of Loch Katrine, illustrating his description of this 'land of enchantment' with quotations from Sir Walter Scott (p. 45). Describing the area around Abbotsford, Scott's home, Cook writes that: 'the spirit of the great Poet lives among the mountains, glens, ravines and plains of the district' (p. 98).<sup>12</sup> This articulation between Scott and the landscape is similar to that we observed in Boswell and Johnson.

Cook acknowledges the relation between the cultural technology of the excursion and its earlier surfaces of emergence. Cook notes that the Abbey at Melrose has 'long been a place of celebrity, and even in its ruins, is likely to continue to be a place of pilgrimage' (p. 90). Like Boswell and Johnson, the excursionist is touring along lines that have already been toured in a manner that has already been operated within. Thus when Cook in his personal

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<sup>12</sup>Similarly, of Killin he notes that the contemporary artist, '[Horatio] MacCulloch says that a busy artist might here draw for a month and not exhaust it' (p. 58).

history of the excursions talks of the additional plans he had by the end of 1850 of 'visiting Watering places and Tourist districts' (p. 106), it is clear that these places and districts were already established as sites worth visiting. However, Cook also marks out his own observations from those that have gone before, either by recommending a particular route to a site such as The Falls of Clyde, or by contradicting an earlier assessment of a site, such as when he suggests that Sir Walter Scott 'might have overdone his description of Perth' (p. 53).

Writing of the Trossachs, Cook describes how 'new phases of beauty pass before the eye, like the shifting scenes of a magnificent panorama' (p. 46). The technology of the excursion combines the two earlier cultural forms of the Grand Tour and the picturesque to produce an oscillation between movement and rest, one moves along the line of the tour, stopping at particular sites to engage with the spectacle. We can see this operating in Cook's description of Perthshire: 'the whole region is one of inconceivable loveliness and enchantment, and there is no wonder that visitors, once there, should wish to linger as long as possible ere they resume their tour' (p. 55). We can see the extent to which the rhetoric of the picturesque and the sublime had infiltrated popular discourse since Johnson's time. Cook employs the discourse of the picturesque tour in his language of views, viewpoints, scenery, his technical recommendation of particular approaches to sites, and in his ability to distinguish between good and bad sites. Discussing one Highland region he remarks that there are 'points of natural beauty very striking', but that 'other parts denuded of trees [...] present nothing very strikingly to arrest the motion of the traveller' (p. 90). At other sites in the landscape, Cook employs the tropes of Romanticism. At 'the most awfully magnificent scene' of Glencoe Cook makes an explicit connection between the landscape, the fictional figure of Ossian, and the historical events of the massacre, another instance of the way in which the discourse of travel 'textualises' the landscape, embedded it in its own narrative of the past. 'What sublimity mingles with the desolation' he exclaims, referring to Glencoe as the 'Valley of the Shadow of Death' (pp. 85-6). Like many guide books then, Cook's *Directory* not only lead the tourer to particular objects or places of interest, it also dictates the type of response the tourer should have to that object or place; it is a guide not



only for the body but also for the mind.

In his *Directory*, Cook notes that 'we have many indications of a more liberal spirit towards even the humblest class of Excursionists' (p. 22).<sup>13</sup> This statement only makes sense in the context of another shift in touring practice enabled by Cook's institutional intervention. Although it is clear that the tours were still too expensive for the working class, buying block tickets for large parties enabled Cook to offer cheap excursion tickets for 'associated parties travelling together under a system of personal supervision' (p. 26). Consequently, members of the middle class previously unable to afford to tour, now had the opportunity to visit those sites that had up till this time been the exclusive terrain of the upper class. Nevertheless, Cook is conscious of the distinctions that operated between his Excursionists and the traditional Tourists. While joking that the difference between the two groups is that the Tourists pay double the excursionists (p. 25), Cook refers to it as a 'social distinction', noting that among the higher rated travellers the term 'Excursionist' is 'used opprobriously' (p. 25).

The crucial difference between the new Excursionists and the established Tourists was class, and we should see the 'opprobrious' use of 'Excursionist' as the type of conflict between Middle-brow taste (Excursionist) and Legitimate taste (Tourist) discussed by Bourdieu (1986). The Tourists possess the economic and cultural 'capital' accumulated through upbringing and education that the Excursionists are seen to lack; the difference in title confers a distinction in social status. Buzzard notes that 'Cook was castigated for the absurd overestimation of his tourists' capacity to better themselves on brief jaunts sold by a tourist organiser and facilitated by the new transport' (p. 59). In other words, to the Tourists, the newly mobile Excursionists lacked the cultural capital, the aesthetic and historical knowledge produced by years of exclusive education, to appreciate the cultural objects they encountered on their tours. Countering this attack Cook argued that 'Many of the working classes also well know how to appreciate the beautiful in nature and art' (Cook, p. 121).

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<sup>13</sup>Cook claimed that his company had 'a special regard for the most humble class of travellers' (p. 18).

It was not only economic and cultural capital that distinguished the Excursionists from the Tourists. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert first visited Scotland in 1842, leasing Balmoral Castle in 1848, and purchasing it in 1852. This royal patronage of the Highlands, publicised in the paintings of Landseer and the Queen's own *Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands* (1868), legitimised Scotland as a desirable holiday location for the landed gentry (Butler, p. 379). From the mid-nineteenth century, holidaying in Scotland bestowed a social distinction satirised in 1871 by Trollope's novel, *The Eustace Diamonds*:

A great many people go to Scotland in the autumn. When you have your autumn holiday in hand to dispose of it, there is nothing more aristocratic that you can do than to go to Scotland. Dukes are more plentiful there than in Pall Mall, and you will meet an earl or at least a lord on every mountain. Of course, if you merely travel about from inn to inn, and neither have a moor of your own or stay with any great friend, you don't quite enjoy the cream of it; but to go to Scotland in August and stay there, perhaps, till the end of September, is about the most certain step you can take towards autumnal fashion. (1973a, p. 292)

For the landed gentry, touring in Scotland also displayed what Bourdieu terms 'social capital'. With social capital, status is derived not from what you know, but from who you know, your family, friends, and acquaintances. Boswell and Johnson were able to use their social capital extensively on their Scottish tour, carrying letters of introduction which facilitated the mechanics and managing of their trip. Boswell writes that 'we had invitations from the chiefs Macdonald and Macleod; and, for additional aid, I wrote to Lord Elibank, Dr. William Robertson, and Dr. Beattie' (p. 168). Cook's excursionists, possessing little social capital, 'merely travel about from inn to inn', relying not on an 'old boy's' network but on the new touring network organised by Cook. Nevertheless, the royal presence in the Highlands was not insignificant for the Excursionists. The *Directory* mentions that Queen Victoria was particularly impressed with the Spittal of Glenshee (Cook, p. 76), and provides a lengthy description of Balmoral castle and the history of its purchase from the Blacks. For the Excursionists, one of the attractions of the Scottish tour known as the 'Royal Route' was the possibility of glimpsing a view of the Queen herself, and the *Directory* narrates such an occasion from an earlier tour. At the Queen's local church Cook suggests 'a pleasant thought to entertain, of monarchs and subjects meeting on same level' (p. 71). For Cook, this type of social levelling was one of the benefits of the



excursion system. For the upper classes, this was exactly what was wrong with it.

The struggle for distinction over touring was reproduced in its key enabling apparatuses, the railway. For upper class Victorians such as Lord de Mowbray in Disraeli's 1845 novel *Sybil*, when railways arrived they were viewed as 'very dangerous things' (1926, p. 104). To Lord de Mowbray, this danger was not a bodily one, a common enough fear in Victorian Britain, but a social one, as Samuel Smiles, author of the Victorian best-seller *Self-Help*, explains in his 1874 biography of George Stephenson:

It was some time, however, before the more opulent classes, who could afford to post to town in aristocratic style, became reconciled to railway travelling. The old families did not relish the idea of being conveyed in a train of passengers, of all ranks and conditions, in which the shopkeeper and the peasant were carried along at the same speed as the duke and the baron - the only difference being in price. It put an end to that gradation of rank in travelling, which was one of the few things left by which the nobleman could be distinguished from the Manchester manufacturer and bagman. (1969, p. 118)

This disappearance of distinction, Lord de Mowbray refers to it as a 'very dangerous tendency to equality' (Disraeli, p. 103), is celebrated by the *Directory* as the 'harmonising influence' of a good railway system, which breaks down 'petty distinctions of names and circumstances' (Cook, p. 27). Cook suggests that it was not only the division of class but also that of gender that was breached by his excursions, claiming that the majority of travellers on his Highland tours have been ladies (p. 32). This marks a shift from both earlier forms of touring. The Grand Tour was conceived as part of a 'Gentleman's' education, while the picturesque tour, according to Buzzard, 'retained the assumptions of gender given to its founders, who imagined a male art of seeing that could correct and complete what a feminized landscape held forth' (p. 16).

Jonathan Culler (1981) argues that the key criteria modern travellers use to distinguish themselves from tourists is 'authenticity':

The distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic, the natural and the touristy, is a powerful semiotic operator within tourism. The idea of seeing the real Spain, the real Jamaica, something unspoiled, how the natives really work or live, is a powerful touristic *topos*, essential to the structure of tourism. (p. 131)

Drawing on Culler, Buzzard argues that 'If there is one dominant and recurrent image in the annals of the modern tour, it is surely that of the *beaten track*, which succinctly designates

the space of the 'touristic' as a region in which all experience is predictable and repetitive, all cultures and objects mere 'touristy' self-parodies' (p. 4). Buzzard argues that, partly thanks to Cook, 'the exaggerated perception that the Continental tour was becoming more broadly accessible than ever before gave rise to new formulations about what constituted 'authentic' cultural experience (such as travel is supposed to provide) and new representations aimed at distinguishing authentic from merely repetitive experience' (p. 6). Between 1800 and 1918, amongst upper and middle 'touring classes' 'anti-tourism evolved into a symbolic economy in which travellers and writers displayed marks of originality and "authenticity" in an attempt to win credit for acculturation' (p. 6).<sup>14</sup> While acculturation was the object of the touring classes, and while the 'authentic cultural experience' of an other way of life was the object of Boswell and Johnson, there is no evidence in the *Directory* to suggest that either acculturation or authentic culture were the object of the Excursionists in Scotland. While the travellers' aim was to stay off 'the beaten track', the Scottish Excursionists aim was to stay on it.

So what was the object of travel for the Excursionist? Cook argued that the benefit of an excursion was that it 'improves mind and body' (p. 22), a view echoed by the *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal*: 'As to the effect of the trip upon the tourist himself, we need say little: he can strengthen his health and expand his ideas' (p. 281).<sup>15</sup> As we saw in Chapter Three, the articulation between leisure and health was a common one in mid-Victorian Britain, with particular leisure spaces designated as beneficial to the physical body. In particular, there were hydropathic hotels, the seaside resort, and the public park, each providing beneficial water, climate or air. The question of health was bound up with that of morality; 'Oxygen, it was thought, was close to virtue, and foul air close to vice' (Rojek, 1993, p. 46). Cook, dismissive of the 'sustaining influence of alcohol, or soothing power of "the weed"', argued that 'smoking and drinking in carriages are nuisances' (p. 119), and castigated 'some of the working class Excursionists of Scotland, where day trips are often occasions of

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<sup>14</sup>Dean MacCannell (1976) argues that in this quest for the authentic, twentieth century tourists attempt to enter the unstaged, back regions of a culture, which responds by 'staging' its own authenticity.

<sup>15</sup>The *Journal* went as far as to argue that 'there are few guineas better spent than in an active run into other counties and other countries' (p. 281).



drunken revelry' (p. 121). But it is not just that these two leisure practices should be kept apart. Lamenting the money wasted by the working classes in 'a single evening party, a night frolic', Cook argues that 'there are Mechanics and Artisans who in a single "outing" will spend more than would have taken them to Scotland and back' (p. 122); carnal indulgence should be replaced by rational recreation.

That Cook is operating in the terrain of the nineteenth century leisure reformists discussed in Chapter Three is illustrated by the fact that his initial management of the rail transport system for mass transport was to facilitate attendance at Temperance meetings for the 'furtherance of this social reform' (pp. 103-4).<sup>16</sup> In providing special excursion fares to the Great Exhibition, Cook argued that Working Men should go 'not as to a show or place of amusement, but a great School of Science, of Art, of Industry, of Peace and Universal Brotherhood' (Cook qtd. in Buzzard, p. 54). Cook argued that excursions also served such a 'social principle'; 'breaking down the partition walls of prejudice, subduing evil passions and unhappy tempers, expansion of the intellect, grasping for information, desire for books, improvement in health and prospects' (Cook, 1866, p. 119). The Excursionists were persuaded to adopt this principle not through coercion and legislation, but through "'the gentle way" of moral regulation' (Rojek, p. 32) discussed in Chapter Three. Cook observes that while 'Total Abstinence is never made a condition of any travelling privilege [...] I have marked with pleasure the silent workings of example' (p. 121). Like Sir Ian Colquhoun in *Scotland for Fitness*, Cook didn't want compulsory powers, he led by instruction, through the *Directory*, and by example, as a tour manager on the excursion. The model here is not regulation from above, but self-regulation. Within the apparatus of the tour he served a supervisory function that extends beyond moral regulation to encompass the supervision of the gaze, the direction of the particular way of seeing objects and landscapes encountered within the apparatus of the tour.

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<sup>16</sup>For a history of Cook's tours see Pudney, 1953; Swinglehurst, 1982; Turner and Ash, 1975.

## Conclusion

*A Description, a Journey, a Journal, and a Directory.* Although Martin, Johnson, Boswell, and Cook sometimes follow the same track, these four texts operate within different and shifting fields; the study of the way of life of human groups, and the tour. The title of each work indicates something of the relation between the subject and the object of its discourse. For Martin, the Grand Tour is present as a negative space against which he can measure his *Description* of his own culture. For Johnson, travel is an opportunity to further educate oneself through the encounter with other cultures; for Boswell, travel is an opportunity to fashion one's self and one's relation to that culture; for Cook, travel is a commercial enterprise that facilitates a rational leisure practice. In Martin and Herder, we see the emergence of an object, the way of life of human groups, and the study of that object, that do not yet have names. In Boswell and Johnson, this way of life is one of fascinating otherness. That object disappears in Cook, but emerges in the same period as the object of a legitimate academic discipline. In other words, we have sketched the archaeology of three practices as they manifested themselves in Scotland, the discursive formations of history and ethnography, and the cultural technology of tourism. Although these three are not co-present in Cook, they re-emerge together in the 1950s in the Films of Scotland travelogues.

Ian Hunter (1988) has argued that the emergence of literary education can be traced to a 'complex historical transformation [...] begun at the end of the eighteenth century but not completed until the first decades of our own,' whereby 'the reading and criticism of literature lost their function as the aesthetico-ethical practice of a minority caste, and acquired a new deployment and function as an arm of the emergent governmental educational apparatus' (p. 3). Might we suggest that Cook's tours operate within a similar transformation? Until the end of the eighteenth century, the touring of other countries was practised by an elite minority of the population, that included Johnson and Boswell, as a form of further education or acculturation, the acquisition of cultural capital. Even within the Romantic aesthetic, visiting the sublime sights of Europe and Scotland was still a practice of the self whereby the individual undergoes an aesthetico-ethical transformation.



But across the nineteenth century, epitomised in Cook, this undergoes a radical shift, again as a result of a series of complex historical circumstances.

This practice does not at the end of the nineteenth century become deployed by government, but by an economic and administrative apparatus capable of combining a concern with individual self-fulfilment, to use Cook's words it 'improves mind and body', with new techniques of communication that could operate at the level of large groups of people, the guidebook, the tour guide, the railway and steamer systems. This apparatus, part of the rise of mass tourism in the late nineteenth century, is of course the tour company, a business organisation, part of the emerging complex of capitalist consumer culture into which by the second half of the twentieth century it has become thoroughly incorporated. In the next chapter, we explore the space of representation within which this technology operated in the Scottish context in the twentieth century. In particular we look at the way in which the autobiographical traveller found in travel writing is replaced by the cinema spectator, *transported* by the travelogue's perceptual machinery. Interestingly, the transformation discussed by Hunter that I am aligning Cook's tours with here took place during the same period in which the art gallery and the museum, the institutions that made up 'the exhibitionary complex' described by Bennett (1988), 'were involved in the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains in which they had previously been displayed (but to a restricted public) into progressively more open and public arenas' (p. 74). It is the central argument of this thesis that the documentary is part of this exhibitionary complex.

## Chapter 6

### The Travelogue

Chapters Three and Four focused primarily on the documentaries produced by the first Films of Scotland Committee, this chapter turns to those produced by the second. In the light of the preceding chapters, in terms of both the institutional space of the Committee and the discursive formation of Scotland, it no longer seems surprising that the production of the second Committee is dominated by the travelogue, which accounts for almost half the films produced. Indeed, a key argument of this chapter is that the travelogue reproduces the discourses we have been concerned with so far, the discourses of history and ethnography.

Although it was not until the Development of Tourism Act of 1969 that a unified government policy on tourism was developed (McCrone, Morris & Kiely, 1995, p. 77), local and regional tourist boards such as Inverness and Loch Ness Tourist Association, and Skye Tourist Association, along with municipal bodies such as the Corporation of the City of Aberdeen, the Royal Burgh of Ayr, Edinburgh Corporation, and Perth County and Town Councils, funded the production of travelogues by Films of Scotland. As this list of sponsors suggests, by the 1950s travelogues are fully enmeshed in the machinations of consumer culture; they are as much advertisements as they are vehicles for static travel.

The opening of *Loch Lomond* (1967) demonstrates something of the relation between the travelogue and tourism:

(Shots of holiday makers on the shore of Loch Lomond)

*Voice Over:* Loch Lomond, a place, a song, an idea. For people in many unlikely places it has come to be hearsay to suggest a wide variety of things. Scotland in miniature, beauty, nostalgia, sentiment, majestic solitude. For many others, Loch Lomond has been delivered through the letterbox on pleasantly predictable postcards. Comparatively few will test their private impressions against the reality of a visit, those who do will have no cause for disappointment. Proof against the summer villages of caravans and tents, Loch Lomond's image of natural beauty will endure to be enjoyed. The visitors will take home a certain sense of satisfaction, since their knowledge of the loch goes deeper than a postcard. But there is a side to the loch which they too will have missed.

This reproduces the traveller/tourist distinction in a different way: we, the audience, are the



traveller, we watch the tourists leave and then get to see the authentic/real Loch Lomond, the shepherds and foresters, the Loch outside the holiday season. Travelogues therefore locate themselves both within and beyond tourism, they promise to offer something more. And it is this that we are promised, sitting in our cinema seats, our pleasure comes from being transported to another place without moving, and we will get to meet these other people who know the 'real' Loch Lomond. Further, as the narration indicates, in visiting a place we are also visiting an association of ideas, a collection of meanings. This indicates the other reason why this chapter is devoted to the travelogue. In the twentieth century it is in the travelogue that the 'study' of the way of life of human groups and the technology of the tour, our concerns of the previous chapter, undergo a further transformation. Travelogues, just as they are part of the aggregate of commercial activities we know as tourism, are part of the circulation of the mimetic capital of cultural otherness, and an engagement with powerful desires caught up in the act of discursive representation.

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle argued that the epic, comic, tragic, lyric, and dramatic, 'corresponded to certain broad categories of mental attitudes that predispose the reader's imagination in one way or another and make him want or expect types of situations and actions, of psychological, moral, and esthetic values' (Genette, 1989, pp. 72-3). Each of these genres was distinguished by the fact that they each had what Todorov (1977) termed their own system of 'verisimilitude'. Drawing on this notion, film theorists have argued that film genres similarly have their own 'regimes of verisimilitude' (Neale, 1990, p. 46), generic rules of appropriateness which its audience expect them to adhere to. The first part of the chapter looks specifically at the travelogue as a genre, the rest of the chapter attempts to establish its 'regime of verisimilitude'. The chapter rejects the idea that travelogues are limited to those films designated as such by their producers. In particular, we are concerned with the travelogues relation to earlier 'technologies of vision'. In doing so, we are building on John Urry's (1990) work on what he calls, drawing on Foucault, the 'tourist gaze', the 'socially organised and systematised' way in which tourists look on 'a set of different scenes, of landscapes or townscapes which are out of the ordinary' (p. 2).

The second section of this chapter analyses the relation of the travelogue to narrative, the

third discusses the way it continues our theme of touring cultures, and the fourth section looks at the manufacture of history in the genre. The final part of the chapter considers discursive shifts that marked the travelogue in the 1970s, shifts not limited to this technology but indicative of instabilities in the discursive regimes on which it draws. One underlying concern of the chapter is the considerable strategic shift from the documentaries produced by the first committee to those produced by the second, a shift we might characterise at this point as a shift from the nationalistic to the commercial. This discussion is followed by a summative statement for the whole thesis.

### **The Travelogue and Genre**

Travelogues were made for the cinema from its inception, ranging from basic scenes or panoramas of familiar places, to short travelogues which grouped scenes of 'exotic' countries into a continuous series of views (Low and Manwell, 1973). Hundreds of travelogues were produced by Hollywood in its heyday as fillers in the motion picture theatre programmes, many of them of Scottish subjects, and British distributors used them to fulfil their domestic product quota. In Chapter Three, we noted how in 1896 the travelling showman George Green, brought moving pictures to Scotland as one of his fairground amusements. The films, screened during the Christmas Carnival at Vinegar Hill Show Ground, east of Glasgow Cross included Warwick Trading Company's *Fingal's Cave* (1896) (McBain, 1986, p. 376), a travelogue of the hexagonal basalt formations of the isle of Staffa and its large cave. The site's popularity was initially derived from James McPherson's heroic epic *Fingal* (1761), a bricolage of Scotland's literary and historical capital, and that of other literary 'classics' (Simpson, 1988, pp. 53-4). The cave was subsequently the inspiration of Felix Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture* (1832), after Mendelssohn took the steamer to Staffa in 1829. This is an early indication of how the travelogue, like the tour, is often built around an region's mimetic capital. Prior to the travelogues produced in Scotland, many of the films produced by British film production companies also took Scotland, or parts of Scotland, as their destination (cf. Wilson, 1945, pp. 21-36). They included films such as *St Kilda - Britain's Loneliest Isle* (1923), *The Magic North* (1933), *The Outer Isles* (1935), *Bonnie Scotland Calls You* (1938) and *Land*



*O' Clans* (1938).

The term 'travelogue' was not used until the nineteenth century. Literally and semantically a combination of travel and monologue, the term referred to an illustrated lecture about places and experiences encountered in the course of travel. In the generic interplay of repetition and originality, originality in the travelogue rests primarily on a difference of location. As a practice it was enabled by the ancient literary genre of travel writing, and the recent communication technology of photography.

In terms of film, the prominence of the travelogue is illustrated by Steve Neale's (1990) work on the 'generic regimes' of early cinema. Neale argues that film catalogues demonstrate that 'documentary genres far outweighed fiction in the period prior to 1903/4' (pp. 55-6). More specifically, I want to argue that his examination demonstrates the dominance of the 'scenic' film in this period. Out of the fourteen subject headings in Biograph's 1902 'Advance Partial List', four of the types of title available for purchase are Railroad Views, Scenic Views, Marine Views, and Pan-American Exposition Views, and another seven are listed as other kinds of views; while Kleine Optical Company's 1905 catalogue lists 'Scenic' as one of the five groups of films available (cited in Neale, p. 55). The prominence of the notion of the scene and the view is particularly striking, and draws attention to those earlier 'technologies of vision' on which the travelogue draws. Painting, particularly from the eighteenth century onwards, allowed the viewer to look on geographically distant scenes or views in the comfort of an art gallery. For instance, from the 1830s Horatio McCulloch's landscapes, such as *Bothwell Castle* (1837), *An Island Keep* (1843), and *The Entrance to Glencoe from Rannoch Moor* (1846), provided a comprehensive coverage of the Scottish highlands. But it is commercial photography in the mid-nineteenth century that the travelogue is especially indebted to, particularly the stereoscope and the panorama.

The stereoscope was devised in 1832 but not popularised until the 1850s (Taylor, 1981, p. 60). The design of the apparatus incorporated the principles of human vision to create the illusion of a three dimensional image of the subject of the photograph. Further, like the

cinema, its design was such that the viewer's entire field of vision was taken up by the scene that is the object of their gaze, in effect fully transporting them to the position from which the photograph was taken. There was a particular demand from tourists of stereoscopic views of the townscapes and landscapes they had visited, which commercial photographers responded to. In Scotland, George Washington Wilson's studio in Aberdeen, which published its first list of stereoscopic views available for purchase in 1856, dominated this market. Wilson would go on his own 'photographic tours', photographing the established tourist sites of Scotland such as Glencoe, the Falls of Clyde, Braemar Castle, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, and Edinburgh's Princes Street (Taylor, 1981, p. 62). Although he had Royal Patronage from 1854 (Withers, 1994, p. 68), Wilson's work was not restricted to the aristocracy or photographic exhibitions, but aimed at the general public, annually producing hundreds of thousands of prints (Taylor, 1981, p. 63); like Cook, Wilson was situated on the cusp of consumer culture.<sup>1</sup>

Wilson's 'way of seeing' was not only determined by the limitations of the technology, particularly the wet collodin process, it also corresponded to the painterly codes of the time. *Photographic Notes*, a journal which reviewed Wilson's work and to which he had written, commented that 'the public will have read Ruskin and studied Turner to advantage and that subjects which include natural sky and distances will be most appreciated' (cited in Taylor, 1981, p. 69). Like his contemporaries Le Gray and Fenton, Wilson originally trained as an artist. That he worked within a set of compositional 'rules' such as those laid out by Ruskin and embodied by Turner can be seen in his description of his method:

[T]he only principle which guides me in selecting my points of view is that I am never satisfied unless I can get the objects comprehended, even in a stereoscopic-sized plate, to compose in such a manner that the eye, in looking at it, shall be led insensibly round the picture, and at last find rest upon the most interesting spot, without having any desire to know what the neighbouring scenery looks like. [...] My employment on dull days is generally to hunt up foregrounds for such subjects as I have decided on photographing. (qtd. in Taylor, pp. 72-3)

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<sup>1</sup>Wilson's 1856 catalogue lists 44 different views, seven years later there were 473, by 1877 there were 4,500 (source: Taylor, pp. 64 & 112).



Points of view, composition, foreground, guiding the gaze of the viewer, these terms are familiar from the picturesque way of seeing the landscape.

The cinematic travelogue is prefigured by another technology of vision, the panorama, 'a circular painting that was illuminated and watched by the viewer in complete darkness', and a variation of the panorama, the diorama, 'which presented changing panoramic scenes, thus creating for its spectators the spatio-temporal motion of a real journey' (Bruno, 1993, p. 208). Writing on early Italian cinema, Giuliana Bruno has called attention to 'the genealogical link between film and the panoramic-anatomic space of nineteenth-century vision', arguing that cinema is inscribed 'in the kinetic (dis)embodiment of visuality' (p. 4). She employs the term "panoramic vision" to describe the perceptual manner in which film condenses time and space, arguing that 'this new visuality, grounded in a panoramic gaze, heir of the panorama painting and the diorama, results in a new geography' (pp. 49-50). The 'spectatorial pleasures of travel(ogu)ing' (p. 6) described by Bruno have their literary equivalent in travel writing, as George Dempster's letter to Boswell illustrates:

I cannot admit a moment to return you my best thanks for the entertainment you have furnished me, my family, and guests, by the perusal of Dr. Johnson's "Journey to the Western Islands;" - and now for my sentiments of it. - I was well entertained. His descriptions are accurate and vivid. He carried me on the Tour along with him. (Dempster qtd. in Boswell, 1965, p. 435)

While Johnson's use of language enables Dempster to be lifted from his armchair and carried in his imagination on the tour, the photography's illusory resemblance to the real facilitates the disembodiment described by Bruno to a greater degree. With the coming of cinema, this disembedding is heightened further, as Bruno argues: 'A voyage is produced by an apparatus of vision, as the spectator travels through and along sites in a perceptual machine ensemble. In a movie theatre, as in a train, one is alone with others, travelling in time and space, viewing panoramically from a still sitting position through a framed image in motion' (p. 50). Cinema, she argues, is 'a site without a geography, a space capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several incompatible sites as well as times' (p. 47). Combining the genre of travel writing with those of the stereoscope, the panorama and the diorama, travelogues transport us through landscapes (panoramic) to rest at particular sites (stereoscopic), it is a technology of movement and stillness, of a travelling (panning) gaze



and a stationary one.

### The Travelogue and Narrative

Travelogues offer little in the way of narrative closure. The usual form is one of two tropes; we close with a sun set or night fall (*A Town Called Ayr*, *A Song for Prince Charlie*) or, as in *The Face of Scotland*, we look to the future (*The Borders: Where England and Scotland Meet*) or often both (*Dunfermline*). More complex is the way that travelogues open. Like *The Face of Scotland*, the majority of the travelogues begin by approaching the geographical subject of the film, be it Scotland, the Hebrides, Inverness or wherever from the outside. This takes two forms: the camera may itself physically enter the space from the outside, such as the helicopter shots up the coast of East Lothian to Edinburgh itself in *Castle and Capital* (1980); or the travelogue narrates the arrival of someone else to the space, as *Highland Capital* (1968) does: 'One day, over fourteen hundred years ago, St Columba set sail from the Isle of Iona to bring light to the North'. Sometimes, as is the case with *The Face of Scotland*, a travelogue will combine both.

Like *The Face of Scotland*, a number of travelogues begin with what we might call the invasion trope; they recount the entry into Scotland of the Roman army, (*The Heart of Scotland* (1962)), the invading English, or armies of tourists (*Holiday Scotland* (1966)). As we have seen, the invasion trope serves a number of functions related to the maintenance of national identity. It constructs Scotland as a nation with a history reaching back to Roman times; it sets up an opposition between Scots and non-Scots, allowing the former group to define itself against the latter; and it draws attention to the national boundary, beyond which lies that other nation. Again like *The Face of Scotland*, the trope highlights Scottish popular memory's thematic preference for military exploits, the border wars aiding the construction of a tradition of enmity between Scotland and the old enemy, the English. Crucially, as we have argued, it also approaches Scotland from the *outside*, reproducing a discursive difference between the subjects of the documentary (the film makers and the audience) and its object (Scotland).

The opening of other travelogues is marked by a rather different trope. *St Kilda - The*



*Lonely Islands* (1968) begins with an extract from Martin Martin's account of his voyage across to St. Kilda at the end of the seventeenth century; *Over the Sea to Skye* (1961) begins with the lines 'By narrow seaways, and offshore islands, from one moment of wonder to another, they sail at last into the harbour of Portree; and *Enchanted Isles* (1957) opens at Oban harbour: 'This is the road to the isles. Kings, queens, and princes have taken this road, pilgrims and scholars, Doctor Johnson, in the autumn of 1773. Holiday makers in the summers of today. Poets, painters, composers, rich men, poor men, many travellers from many lands.' Thus, just as we are following a road that has already been trodden, and this is explicit in the narration's use of quotations from earlier authors such as Martin and Johnson, we can again argue that we are also following a script that has already been written, indicating the extent to which the documentary's production of knowledge about the Hebrides is embedded in earlier cultural and discursive formations, not necessarily exclusive to either the Hebrides or to Scotland in general. As in the previous trope, we begin by physically entering the subject of the film, but I want to suggest that its function is particularly tied to the construction of regional rather than national difference. In the journey from the mainland to the islands a difference and a distance is manufactured between traveller and native, the observers and the observed. This question of the difference between cultural groups is a central concern of ethnography and we shall return to this below.

In none of the Films of Scotland travelogues is the narrator *visually* present in the film. However, the camera often follows a traveller or travellers who we see on the screen in the travel space. This figure rarely addresses the camera directly; instead we have the familiar voice of God narration. In terms of its mode of address then, the cinematic travelogue holds back from the shifts in documentary style that took place in television in the 50s (Corner, 1991). Going back to our earlier argument about the new geography of the travelogue, we might suggest that the figure of the autobiographical traveller found in travel writing is replaced by the spectator, individual members of the audience transported by the travelogue's perceptual machinery.

While the geographical location of the travelogue, the city, town, island, or region provides

the narrative's consistent subject, our definition of narrative requires that there be a logical connection between the different events narrated. We noted a similar problem in Chapter Four with regard to *The Face of Scotland*, where on a number of occasions a linguistic manoeuvre was used to shift from one subject to the next, rather than a causal link. If we look back at Johnson and Boswell, we might argue that it is the movement of the tour itself, or the time of the tour, that links the different sections. It is no accident that Johnson's chapters are labelled geographically and Boswell's chronologically. But this remains problematic for the travelogue, where these distinctions of time and place are not always that explicit.

In fact, research suggests that this lack of narrative causal linkage is a structuring feature of travel writing in general. Greenblatt (1992) argues that 'the discourse of travel in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance is rarely if ever interesting at the level of sustained narrative and teleological design, but gripping at the level of anecdote' (p. 2). He argues that early travel accounts 'present the world not in stately and harmonious order but in a succession of brief encounters, random experiences, isolated anecdotes of the unanticipated' (p. 2). *Enchanted Isles* (1957), a tour around the Hebrides, is typical of the Films of Scotland travelogues in this regard. In the film, we are told tales of Norse invasions, Hebridean folklore, and St Columba, we visit St Margaret's nunnery, Fingal's Cave, and the birthplace of Flora MacDonald, and we gaze on scenes of arable farming, tweed weaving, and seaweed harvesting. How should we make sense of this dispersion of objects and anecdotes?

An answer to this crucial question can be found in Neale's (1987) discussion of the nature of the relationship between narrative and genre. In this instance, Neale is specifically concerned with fictional cinematic genres, but I want to suggest that his argument can equally be applied to non-fiction genres such as the travelogue, and non-cinematic genres such as travel writing. Neale argues of genre, that:

In each case, the marks of generic specificity as such are produced by an articulation that is always constructed in terms of particular *combinations* of particular types or categories of discourse. The organisation of a given 'order' and of its disruption should be seen always in terms of conjunctions of and disjunctions between multiple sets of



discursive categories and operations (p. 21).

Now, I want to suggest that the genre of the travelogue is defined and regulated by an oscillation between the discourses of history and ethnography. The oscillation between ethnographic description and historical narration, where historical narration is understood both as the narrative of the tour itself *and* the discourse of history, structures the travelogue's production of knowledge. Further, this oscillation also structures the texts of the travel writers discussed in the previous chapter, particularly that of Boswell.

For instance, *Over the Sea to Skye* (1961) observes scenes of wool spinning and horse drawn ploughs, and narrates Ossianic legends of rock hurling giants and tales of Dunvegan Castle. I am suggesting then that the travelogues operate within two discourses, the discourse of history and the discourse of ethnography, and that this not only determines and limits the objects that the travelogues talk about, it also manages the *manner* in which those objects are talked about. Travelogues are often characterised by a continuous switching between ethnographic description and historical narration, the continuity of the figurative language, 'rich in arable land, and rich in folklore too' (*Enchanted Isles*), the creative geography of the editing, and the strategy of travel itself facilitating the shift to a different discursive domain. In the next two sections, I want to consider the operation of these discursive categories in the genre in more detail.

### **Touring Cultures**

In the 1920s ethnography began to talk about a people and its culture in a manner remarkably similar to Martin, Herder, Johnson, and Boswell.<sup>2</sup> I want to argue that if we can see the first discursive stirrings of ethnography in eighteenth century travel writing, there is an even fuller fledged mobilisation of ethnography in twentieth century travelogues. Indeed, Dean MacCannell (1992) has argued that 'Tourism today occupies the gap between primitive and modern, routinely placing modernised and primitive peoples in direct, face-

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<sup>2</sup>Although travel accounts are 'those kinds of writing from which ethnography has traditionally distinguished itself' (Pratt, 1986, p. 33).

to-face interaction' (p. 17), it is a movement and a meeting between the two. James Clifford (1988) defines ethnography as 'the interpretation of cultures' (p. 39). As Clifford argues, in the process of constructing and reconstructing 'coherent cultural others', there is always something 'torn off, as it were, to construct a public believable discourse' (p. 112). Drawing on Nietzsche, Clifford argues that this tearing off 'is simultaneously an act of censorship and of meaning creation' (p. 112). Drawing on Clifford's work, I want to explore the kinds of meanings that are created, the kinds of knowledge that are produced in travelogues when the meeting between the primitive and the modern that MacCannell describes takes place.

Clifford argues that from the 1920s 'ethnography was marked by an increased emphasis on the power of observation. Culture was construed as an ensemble of characteristic behaviours, ceremonies and gestures susceptible to recording and explanation by a trained onlooker' (p. 31). The ethnographer's narratives of this ensemble, Clifford argues, 'effectively implicate readers in the complex subjectivity of participant observation' (p. 33). I want to argue that this 'ethnographic gaze' is also present in the travelogue; the image track presents the people as objects for us to observe; they never face the camera directly, they never address the audience, the image track cuts from facial close-ups to close-ups of the tools they use. This 'ethnographic gaze' represents another technology of vision mobilised by the travelogue. Given that in the travelogues the viewer occupies the same visual space as the camera, they are implicated in the power relations between subject and object that characterise ethnography. The object that this gaze constructs is the cultural group. The narrator in Hebridean travelogues, such as *St Kilda - Britain's Loneliest Isle* (1923), *Over the Sea to Skye* (1961), and *Island of the Big Cloth* (1971), verbally represents the inhabitants of the islands with the collective or general pronoun; 'the natives', 'the People', 'they'; age, sex, social position, occupation, are homogenised for the purposes of constructing a cultural 'type'.

This ethnographic gaze deployed on the inhabitants of the Western Isles is found not only in twentieth century travelogues, but in the nineteenth century commercial photography discussed earlier. It was not only townscapes, landscapes and historic sites that were the



object of Wilson's camera, the inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands were also subjected to the technology of photography. These photographs, along with those of the other major commercial photographer James Valentine, were collected by the Scottish ethnographer Dr Isabelle Frances Grant. Together with Dr Grant's own photographs, they now comprise the Highland Life Collection in the Scottish Library. The title of this archive indicates that each individual photograph is part of a much wider group, life in the Highlands, itself part of a photographic field that we might call 'scenes from everyday life'. The collection is largely made up of photographs of people engaged in such activities as weaving baskets, grinding corn, mending nets, burning kelp, cutting peat, and washing clothes.

However, while we recognise in these photographs their membership to the field of 'everyday life', I think we are invited to look at these photographs in quite a particular way, as images that are quite specifically scenes from the life of an 'other' culture, a culture different or outside that of the photographer and the spectator. The Highland Life Collection exhibits the diverse communities of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland as an 'other' culture, a different way of life. The Highlands and Islands themselves are constructed as a homogenous geographical and cultural space, with no attempt at distinguishing between different parts of this diverse region. The cataloguing of the photographs makes these strategies explicit, as the photographs are located in the archive according to the activities in which their subjects are engaged; Basket Weaving, Heather Burning, Peat Cutting, Seaweed Harvesting, Social Customs and so on. Far from anchoring the meaning of the photographs, the titles themselves emphasise instead the generality of their subjects by simply repeating the catalogue headings and sub-headings to which they belong, subsuming individuality under cultural activity. There is a governing logic to the collection that reflects the logic of the discourse from which they come, the discourse of ethnography.

While the collection claims to represent Highland life, there is a clear tendency for the photographs to focus on some subjects rather than others. The vast majority of the photographs are of people at work; cutting peat, netting salmon, spinning, grinding, basket weaving, kelp burning, herring gutting. Significantly, we find exactly the same

institutional focus on work in the Films of Scotland travelogues such as *Island of the Big Cloth* (1971). Further, the photographs and travelogues focus on particular kinds of work, work done by hand, with simple tools, outside in the natural environment. Even non-Highland documentaries such as *Dunfermline* (1974) and *Tayside* (1974) feature such images. This thematic focus on particular activities is identified by Clifford as symptomatic of the 'new ethnography'; 'The aim was not to contribute to a complete inventory or description of custom but rather to get at the whole through one or more of its parts' (p. 31). Furthermore, from the 1860s to 1974 there seem to have been no technological advances: 'Time has a gentle touch in the Hebrides' says the narrator of *Enchanted Isles*. Here, through its strategic institutional focus, the ethnographic gaze constructs the way of life in the Highlands and Islands as primitive, frozen in time; 'We have always made Tweed from our Highland wool', comments the narrator of *Island of the Big Cloth* (1971). But primitiveness is not a value intrinsic to an object or activity, it is the product of a discursive formation. Foucault (1972) argues that the theoretical choices that a discourse makes are partly dependent on an authority that 'is characterised by the *possible positions of desire in relation to discourse*: discourse may in fact be the place for a phantasmatic representation, an element of symbolisation, a form of the forbidden, an instrument of derived satisfaction' (p. 68). What desire or symbolisation determines the travelogues institutional focus, what satisfaction is derived?

To answer this question, it is useful to consider the photographs and the travelogues as engaged in a type of practice we have not yet considered, a practice that has less to do with their moment of viewing by a spectator and more to do with the archives (physical and discursive) in which they reside. The Highland Life Collection is literally a collection; there has been an economic and administrative investment in accumulating and assembling these photographs and preserving them, holding them in a physical space for an indefinite amount of time. I want to suggest that the travelogues are also engaged in this act of collection.

In Grierson's (1938) radio talk on the 1938 Films of Scotland documentaries, he complained that: 'Occasionally, too, we have had travelogues of Scotland - all about the



bonnie banks of Loch Lomond and kilts and bagpipes and other things that honest Scotsmen are heartily sick of - with an American commentary to demonstrate that the Americans were collecting us with other world curios' (p. 1). It is ironic that Grierson fails to foresee the way in which the travelogue will dominate the output of the second Films of Scotland Committee. His statement can only be understood in relation to his philosophy that documentary film provided the ideal medium for producing a social democratic state of educated citizens (cf. Aitken, 1991), and that as such it must be policed from its dangerously trivialising predecessor (cf. Grierson, 1979a, p. 35). But it is his notion that to film a place and a culture in a travelogue is to collect it that interests me here.

Theorists have also argued that there is a relation between tourism and collection: John Urry argues that 'tourism involves the collection of signs' (p. 3), and Dean MacCannell (1976) argues that tourist 'sights are "collected" by entire societies' (p. 42). Clifford argues that ethnography may also be seen 'as a form of culture collecting' (p. 231). Travelogues are a form of collecting in that they select, arrange, exhibit and preserve culture, even if this culture exists only on celluloid. Such collecting is meaningful because, as Clifford argues, 'the inclusions in all collections reflect wider cultural rules' (p. 218). The rule governing anthropological culture collection, he argues, is that what is collected is what seems 'traditional'. I think we can argue the same of the Highland Life Collection and the Films of Scotland travelogues. Their collection of scenes of working methods is determined by that which is thought to belong to that culture's primitive past.

Benedict Anderson (1983) argues that the nation is 'conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history' (p. 30). In Chapter Four, this was manifest in the way that *The Face of Scotland* manufactured and foregrounded the historical, ethnic continuity of the Scottish people. Similarly, I think we can argue that the desire that determines the Highland Life Collection and the travelogues institutional focus, a focus on traditional working methods, is also the desire for identity. The photographs and travelogues are involved in the manufacture of continuity, the surviving practices they collect give continuity to the collecting culture itself; representation of the cultural other is simultaneously representation of the former primitive self. While the Highlands and

Islands have long served as one of the constructs of difference for British mainland culture, they have also served, at least since Boswell, as a source of identity.

There is nothing new then about this form of self-fashioning. As Stephen Greenblatt (1980) has argued, and as we saw briefly in Boswell, 'there are always selves-a sense of personal order, a characteristic mode of address to the world, a structure of bounded desires-and always some elements of deliberate shaping in the formation and expression of identity' (p. 1). But just as Greenblatt argues that there is in the Renaissance a shift 'in the intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetic structures that govern the generation of identities' (p. 1), so too I think we can safely suggest there has been just such a shift in these structures in the late modern period. Anthony Giddens (1990) has argued that 'the advent of modernity increasingly tears space away from place in fostering relations between "absent" others, locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction' (p. 19). The travelogue is clearly one example of a cultural technology that enables such interaction, by their very nature they have always allowed one cultural group to 'meet' other geographically dispersed cultural groups, and it is partly the mediated displacement of film that makes the form of cultural-fashioning the travelogues are engaged in structurally different from that of earlier periods.

### **Touring History**

As well as the cultural past, the travelogues also manufacture the historical past. This too presents a thematic preference for particular events and particular types of events, and the elision of others. Travelogues such as *Enchanted Isles* (1957), *A Song for Prince Charlie* (1959), and *Over the Sea to Skye* (1961) all centrally feature another piece of mimetic capital in the imagining of Scotland, the flight of Bonnie Prince Charlie, with the assistance of Flora MacDonald, over the sea to Skye after the rout of the Jacobite clans at Culloden in 1746; 'Stepping inland we follow the path of a royal fugitive, perhaps this moor land pool once mirrored the face of Bonnie Prince Charlie as he rested in his flight' (*Enchanted Isles*). There are two questions we might ask of this recurrent narrative event. Why this particular event, rather than the exploits of Bruce and Wallace for instance,



victorious over the English and with most of Scotland behind them? And how is this event represented? Answering the second question we will answer the first.

As we saw in Chapter Four, Hayden White argues that the historian shapes his/her materials in response to the imperatives of narrative discourse in general, imperatives which are rhetorical in nature. Generic story types permit the reader to understand the events as part of a recognisable structure. In response to this generic story type, the historian shapes his materials, displacing some facts to the periphery and moving others to the centre. We can see this tropological nature of historical discourse in the representation of the story of Charles Edward Stuart and Flora MacDonald. The trope takes the Jacobite Rebellion and reduces it to the romantico-tragic story of two individuals. *Over the Sea to Skye* remarks that 'the story of one girl's courage will continue to throw its light across the seas of time'. What I want to argue is that history has been displaced here by a legend that has been woven around two figures that are marked as extraordinary.

I am categorising as legend historical events that are retold in a particular way. Legends are defined as people and events which have a special place in public esteem because of striking qualities or deeds, real or fictitious, and the body of fact and fiction gathered around such people, which becomes a collection of sacred stories. These sacred stories or legends represent a disturbance of the Western epistemological categories of fact and fiction. They are neither literature nor history. The epistemological 'problem' posed by legends is similar to that Stephen Muecke (1983a) argues is posed to European Australians by the oral narratives of Aboriginal History, as Aboriginal societies 'do not recognise a category "fiction"' (p. 73). Rather, Muecke (1983b) argues that story tellers distinguish 'between three types of story: *trustori* (true stories), *bugaregara* (stories from the dreaming) and *devil stori* (stories about devils, spirits, etc.)' (p. vii). *Trustori*, argues Muecke, 'is the equivalent of our word "legend" - the characters of this story are human and can be located in time and space, within the memory of the narrator. The heroes of these stories can also perform fantastic acts' (p. vii). But there is a further similarity between these oral narratives and Western legends. Introducing a collection of Aboriginal stories narrated to him by Paddy Roe, Muecke (1983b) notes that 'As Aboriginal people from the



various communities in this area [the West Kimberley of Western Australia] meet regularly to engage in the activities of their culture, Paddy Roe stresses that these stories belong not just to him, but to all these people' (p. i). Thinking of the films as legend texts helps us to rethink what these films are, a form of textual folk memory.

Muecke argues that Aboriginal oral narratives serve a particular *social* function: 'story-telling is a way of solving social problems, in the sense of integrating and normalising disruptive social events by absorbing them in narrative structures' (p. viii). Historical representation, according to Michel de Certeau (1988) serves a similar function:

It constantly mends the rents in the fabric that joins past and present. It assures a "meaning," which surmounts the violence and the divisions of time. It creates a theatre of references and of common values, which guarantee a sense of unity and a "symbolic" communicability to the group. Finally, as Michelet once said, it is the work of the living in order to "quiet the dead" and to unite all sorts of separated things and people into the semblance of a unity and a presence that constitutes representation itself. (p. 205)

Drawing on Muecke and de Certeau, we can suggest that the recurrent narration of the legend of Charles Edward Stuart and Flora MacDonald in the FoS travelogues serves a particular function. Throughout the Films of Scotland Collection there is one very striking absence, the Act of Union of Parliaments that took place in 1707, an event which the historian T.C. Smout (1990) argues appears to overshadow the whole history of Scotland since the end of the seventeenth century, an event which 'erased the formal Parliamentary independence of Scotland, reduced her to the status of a "region" in the new hybrid kingdom of Great Britain' (p. 199). While focusing on Flora and Charlie draws attention from the atrocities carried out against the Highlanders after Culloden, I want to argue that more significantly it diverts attention from the Act of Union that took place only thirty nine years earlier. If every nation has a trauma in its past that has to be either forgotten or ceaselessly worked through - Germany and the Holocaust, America and Vietnam, Britain and the Empire - it is tempting to suggest that for Scotland it is the Act of Union of Parliaments. Why? Because to recall it is to invoke Scotland's loss of independent statehood, its move to a stateless nation. The legend of Bonnie Prince Charlie and Flora MacDonald is a comfortable house for this discursive strategy because the pressure of



linked events and the assumed coherence of the tale help to pull the reader past these absences, assuring the meaning of the nation in its relation to its past.

Narratives of the past serve another function in the travelogue, the reproduction of a national Scottish heritage. Preserved historical sites and buildings, particularly castles and keeps such as Edinburgh and Stirling, can be visited and gazed upon. These sites, and the narratives which they are associated, guarantee the authenticity of Scotland's history as a nation, evidence of a tradition of national resistance to other nations, and serve as physical monuments to the nation's collective past or memory. But I want to suggest that there is more going on here than the manufacture and marketing of heritage. Over a shot of Stirling castle in *Heart of Scotland* (1962), the narration claims that 'echoes of battles that shaped Scotland's future as a nation carried to here'; *Highland Capital* argues that at 'Culloden, that battleground of dreadful memory [...] the sorrow of defeat is here recorded'; *Enchanted Isles* suggests that: 'The crumbled stones of St Margaret's nunnery brings to mind Dr Johnson's stately tribute "That man is little to be envied, whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona."' What kind of relationship between legend and landscape is being constructed here?

Discussing Mandeville's pilgrimage to the sacred rocks in Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Temple of the Lord, Greenblatt (1990) argues that 'these objects are natural features in the landscape, but they are features that have been transformed by the momentous events that have occurred on them and still more by the simple physical presence, the literal weight, of certain remarkable persons' (p. 38). As a result of this transformation, he argues, the rocks become 'embedded' in sacred stories, and Mandeville reproduces these stories in his account: 'The rocks function then as tangible materialisations of sacred stories. Mandeville and his contemporaries are saturated with such stories, circulating not as chronologies or sources, but as radiances that attach to material existence' (pp. 39-40). I argued in the previous chapter that Boswell and Johnson's accounts of their tour present examples of the same phenomenon, and I want to argue that the same is happening in these travelogues. Although in these accounts, the transformation of features in the landscape is not limited to sacred sites such as Iona, but

also includes rocks embedded in folklore, and landscape passed through by Charles Edward Stuart. That these are not sacred sites or stories in the strictly religious sense of that term, but they are still the object of veneration as a consequence of their embeddedness in particular narratives, or what I have called legends.

But there is a connection between Mandeville's religious pilgrimage and the twentieth century travelogue's journey to sites embedded in their own narratives. With the decline of the religious mode of thought within which Mandeville's sacred stones operated, Anderson (1983) argues that 'what was then required was a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning' (p. 19). He argues that this secular transformation was provided by the idea of the nation. Just as the religious community was 'imaginable largely through the medium of a sacred language and written script' (p. 20), so too was the new national community imagined through its own panoply of signs. These signs include the sites and legends embedded in national narratives, reproduced in the twentieth century through the communication media.

### **Discursive Instability**

By the 70s the travelogues contain moments of irony that point to the fracture in this nostalgic, utopian, and fundamentally ideological attempt to fashion a Scottish *heimat*. They become ironic about their own discursive strategies: *Aberdeen: By Seaside and Deeside* observing the Highland Games remarks that 'of course, when one is so far north, there is the opportunity of viewing the weird pagan rites of the natives'. *Highland Capital* also uses the Highland Games to challenge the very notion of a place rooted identity: 'From up country and down country the clans have foregathered. From the highlands and islands, by sea and by air. Exciled Scotsmen from over the border, emigrant Scots from over the sea, there come MacKays from Toronto, the McNeils from Barra, MacDonalds from Texas and McLeods from Skye'.

Ernest Gellner (1983) argues that although the nation is a 'total and ultimate political community,' and 'though sub-communities are partly eroded, and their moral authority is much weakened, nevertheless people continue to differ in all kinds of ways' (pp. 63 & 64).



For Schlesinger (1991) 'this approach clearly opens up the Gramscian problematic of cultural and ideological dominance in the articulation of discourses of nationhood' (pp. 170-1). What this suggests is that having identified a discursive technology, the selective combination of historiography and ethnography in documentary, and having identified some of its discursive effects, we cannot assume that its practices remain stable, or that its authority remains guaranteed. Could this amount to a transformation in the way that Scotland is represented and the way that knowledge about Scotland is constructed? If there are discursive instabilities they do not appear as part of a general struggle, but as localised disturbances which are indicative of ambiguities in the practices where they occur.

*Island of the Big Cloth* (1971) differs in one fundamental way from the other travelogues we have discussed in that it employs, in its voice-over narration, what has been called the 'indigenous ethnographer', in this case one of the crofters. With the entrance of this figure, Clifford (1986) argues, 'Anthropology no longer speaks with automatic authority for others defined as unable to speak for themselves. Other groups can less easily be distanced in special, almost always past or passing times, - represented as if they were not involved in the present world systems that implicate ethnographers along with the peoples they study' (p. 10). And this point is made explicit in *Sorley Maclean's Island* (1974) which suggests that there are problems with the types of statement and forms of knowledge that the previous texts have produced:

(Shots of three old men on a hill top digging peat)

*Sorley Maclean*: Ever since I was a boy in Raasay, and became aware of the difference between the history I read in books and the oral accounts I heard around me, I have been very sceptical of what might be called received history. The million people, for instance, who died in Ireland in the nineteenth century, the million more who had to emigrate, the thousands of families forced from their homes in the Highlands and Islands. Why was all that?

Famine, overpopulation, improvement, the industrial revolution, expansion overseas. you see, not many of these people understood such words, they knew only Gaelic. But we know now another set of words; clearance, empire, profit, exploitation. Our way of life is besieged by the forces of international big business, our country's beggared by bad communication, the iniquities of land ownership, the failures and unconcern of central government. Our culture is vitiated by the sentimentality of those who have gone away.

We have, I think, a deep sense of generation and community. But this has in so many ways been broken. We have a history of resistance, but now mainly in the songs we sing. Our children are bred for emigration.



Maclean's narration rewrites the history of the islands, explicitly drawing attention to the difference between the dominant history found in school books and the oral accounts of the islanders. Further, it places this local history in the context of international, rather than exclusively national forces. Maclean narrates as one of the islanders, and his narration is structured to implicate the reader as sharing his 'native' position. In the majority of the travelogues, historical narration and ethnographic description are kept apart; while a documentary may switch between the two discourses, the two do not occur simultaneously. But this film is the exception, in the radical difference between the sound and image tracks: while the image track is exclusively ethnographic, the sound track engages historiography, writing a counter history to the official version constructed by the previous, and later, documentaries. In juxtaposing the two discourses, the text places the cultural group within the time-flow of history, reversing ethnography's tendency to construct rural societies as timeless. The juxtaposition also challenges ethnography's mode of address; the visual track invites us to observe another culture, while the sound track addresses us as listeners with a vested interest in that culture.

(A group of people clip sheep with old sheers amongst the ruins of a building)

*Sorley Maclean:* In 1846 the population of Raasay was about a thousand. Today its less than one hundred and fifty. In the summer months of 1973, six Raasay people died, no children were born. The statistical facts of the Clearances are more or less accessible to anyone who cares enough to dig them out. But how can the suffering, the loss and the bitterness be computed? And is there any way, I wonder, in which the lessons of Raasay history can help other peoples to resist the other forms of clearance going on today all over the world?

The history that Maclean narrates illustrates Greenblatt's (1992) argument that 'the possession of weapons and the will to use them on defenceless people are cultural matters that are intimately bound up with discourse: with the stories that a culture tells itself, its conceptions of personal boundary and liability, its whole collective system of rules' (p. 64). It illustrates the underlying argument of this thesis that the actions of human subjects are inseparable from the discursive formations within which they operate, that knowledge is always a practice.

Maclean's film is an isolated example, and should not be read as part of a general struggle



for the transformation of the discursive regimes in which the majority of the documentaries are situated. If there is to be transformation it does not lie with individual filmmakers, but in historical changes in the conditions, contexts and rules that make particular forms of statement possible. The fact that this particular disturbance appears to occur through an individual is indicative of the space within the institution for the authored text, a safety valve for sanctioned opposition. However, it does provide an indication of the way in which a complex crossing of cultural formations can produce a filmic space free from Films of Scotland's institutional constraint of producing 'Scottish films of national interest'. In this sequence, as in other sequences in the film, personal and popular memory are articulated with the representation of a distinct way of life. The effect of this combination of historical and ethnographic discourse is not to reproduce Raasay as a sacred or enchanted space, but to represent it as a thoroughly politicised space in which the lives of the cultural group are deeply embedded in the socio-economics of modernity. Further, the fact that Maclean is able to narrate this history to us, and that we are able to observe the spectacle of his culture, is a consequence of the cultural technology with which this thesis has been concerned.

The travelogue reproduces the discourses of history and ethnography through the narrative of a journey or tour. This narrative orders and makes coherent other narratives whose function is to transform 'ordinary' places and people into something 'extraordinary', into sites/sights worth visiting, invested with symbolic capital and meaning. *Sorley Maclean's Island* indicates the way in which although these sites are embedded in powerful narratives, their meaning is not fixed and may be challenged. While rooted in earlier forms of identity formation, the disembedded nature of the subjectivity that is constructed through these travelogues is a particularly modern one which illustrates something of the role of the media in modern life.

In 1982 Films of Scotland ceased operation. More generally, pressure from Hollywood film companies and British cinema exhibitors finally brought about the state's suspension of the production quota in January 1983 (Dickinson, 1983, p. 95), consolidating the position of the single-feature programme and largely eradicating any remaining demand for

documentary shorts in British cinema exhibition. Crucially for our concerns however, the travelogue itself had not disappeared but had already re-emerged in a slightly different form on television. There is not space for discussion of this form here, but we might note that one crucial difference between the old cinematic and new televisual forms is their mode of address. We noted earlier in this chapter that although in the Films of Scotland travelogues the camera often follows a traveller who we see on the screen in the travel space, narrators themselves are never present on screen, they occupy a non-diegetic space. However, the travelogue on television, following the conventions of that medium, almost always feature an on-screen narrator-traveller, with whom we can be 'intimate at a distance' (Moores, 1995).

Before the mid-nineteenth century, travel writing often stresses the arduous nature of travel itself, of the time and difficulty involved for the traveller in crossing distant spaces, narrating through the medium of print from these spaces to the reader at home. In the illustrated lecture of the nineteenth century, returned travellers shared the same physical space as the members of the audience, bringing images of sites visited on their journeys into the lecture hall. In the cinematic travelogue, the perceptual machinery of film transports the audience themselves to distant places, lifting them out of the physical space of the movie theatre and depositing them across the globe. With the television travelogue there is a further twist, what Moores calls the illusory 'co-presence' of, in this instance, the physically distant but amiable traveller-narrator (eg. Ian Wright in *Lonely Planet*, Michael Palin in *Around the World in Eighty Days*), further 'compressing' our geographical map of the world (Harvey, 1995). The television travelogue has its own sub-genres. The travel programme (eg. *Holiday*, *Scottish Passport*) owes more to the kind of technological and institutional apparatus that we saw in Cook than does the cinematic travelogue, while in the culinary travelogue which began to appear in the late eighties (eg. *Travels a la Carte*, *Rhodes Around Britain*), the traveller-narrator's culinary capital facilitates access to the hitherto 'backstage' region of the kitchen of the other culture. Further discussion of the television travelogue awaits future research.



## Conclusion

Applying an archaeological approach to the Films of Scotland documentaries has produced a radical transformation in our object of study. What started as a thesis on documentary film, on a particular genre within a particular media, has transcended both of those particularities to embrace amongst other things eighteenth century literary journals, and nineteenth century travel guides and commercial photography. In this final section I would like to suggest that this has implications both for the study of film and for the study of Scottish culture, to the extent that it gives us a different idea of what these subjects are about. We have transformed the notion both of the documentary and of 'Scottishness' as objects of study, radically revisiting contemporary film and cultural theory. This final section looks back over the thesis to see how this transformation has come about, and sets out the key practical advantages that this transformation offers.

The review of documentary film theory established that the marginalisation of the Films of Scotland documentaries was, until recently, general across the field of other forms of film outside mainstream commercial cinema. The review established that it was the theoretical discourse in which documentary film emerged that was responsible for this marginalisation. Firstly, in both popular and critical commentary, 'film' is commonly understood to mean feature-length fiction film. Secondly, the emergence of film studies within the field of literary studies and the humanities, resulted in the inheritance of theoretical baggage which included the debate about realism, a problematic concept which stifled discussion of the documentary. Thirdly, the privileging of Saussure's work on the arbitrary and conventional nature of language, problematised what was seen as the deceptive verisimilitude of those documentaries which attempted to say something meaningful about the real. Finally, it was argued that this film studies discourse treated film as a unitary object, thus failing to address the relations between forms of representation in the documentary and those prevailing in other historical and cultural formations.

Our archaeological approach foregrounded these relations. It argued that documentary is

primarily concerned with the domain of exposition, with the production of knowledge, and that that knowledge has a 'debt' to previous historical forms and the way in which the conventions of those forms shape the production of particular kinds of knowledge. Consequently, the archaeological method looks beyond the illusory unity of the isolated film and acknowledges the field of discourse to which it properly belongs.

The second chapter mapped the emergence in the 1980s of an academic discourse whose subject was the representation of Scotland. Again it was argued that this discourse's conditions of existence were partly institutional. But more centrally, our approach established that this discourse was dependent on a far older discourse for its conceptual field, particularly in the relation it conceived between audience, text, and critic. This discourse is described as the 'discourse of reflectionism', a discourse whose function is to break the circuit between the text's ideological representation of the world and the reader's 'naive' consumption of that ideology. More generally, it was argued that this discourse is part of a Cultural Studies project whose attack on aesthetic objects is itself an aesthetic activity, such that the *Scotch Myths*' critique of Romanticism is itself profoundly Romantic. For the purposes of our discussion, there are two related consequences of this aesthetic critique. The first is the validation of texts which 'transgress' bourgeois historiography, drama, and realist strategies. The second is the theoretical abandonment of those texts, such as the *Films of Scotland* documentaries, which fail to display these signs of legitimisation. Documentary film theory and debates about representations of Scotland are located within the same discourse, but on opposite sides of the problematic.

Finally then, the chapter argued that the central problem with the critique of both the documentary film and the representation of Scotland was the status of the text itself. Drawing on Foucault (1972), it argued that until recently theorists have been concerned with whether texts were telling the truth, and what right they had to do so. In other words, despite claims to the contrary, theorists were attempting to reconstitute the real rather than examine the *positivity* of the texts themselves. In order for the thesis to say anything meaningful about Scottish documentary, a methodological shift had to take place, a shift



from hermeneutics to archaeology.

The rest of the thesis was therefore concerned with the way in which the discursive formations within which the documentaries operate shape the knowledge they produce about Scotland. Chapter Three argued that institutionally, Films of Scotland functioned within two historical contexts: state intervention in public culture, and the structural transformation of the public sphere into a mass mediated public sphere. It suggested that the Committee's aim to promote, stimulate and encourage the production of Scottish films of national interest, manifested itself in the 1938 documentaries as the reproduction of the rights and obligations of citizenship, and the manufacture of a sense of national community and belonging. Chapter Four explored this manufacture of national identity in more detail in its archaeological analysis of *The Face of Scotland* (1938). Both chapters argued that the mass mediated circulation of the discourse of nationhood was one of the ways in which the modern nation legitimates its own existence, producing the 'moral component' of the state's sovereignty (Giddens, 1987, p. 220). Chapter Four established that in addition to the discourse of nationhood, *The Face of Scotland* drew on two discursive formations in its production of knowledge about Scotland: the discourse of history and the discourse of ethnography. In particular, it demonstrated that in their passage from the academy to the mass media, these discourses undergo a complex transformation, reverting back to a regularity of objects, subjects and concepts from an earlier manifestation. The chapter also noted the function of the figure of the traveller in the documentary's narrative strategies, a figure of central importance in the travelogues produced by the second committee and in the cultural formations they mobilise.

Chapter Five traced the formation of the space of representation *The Face of Scotland* occupies, a space opened up by the discursive formations of ethnography and history, and the discourse of nationhood. It argued that one earlier surface of emergence for these discourses was the field of travel writing, a field on which the Films of Scotland documentaries explicitly draw. Focusing on eighteenth century Scottish travel writing, the first two parts of the chapter examined the ways in which writers established their authority to produce knowledge about the space in which they travelled, the objects they select, and

the concepts they bring into play. It suggested that these writers were themselves explicitly working within discourses of travel with a long pedigree, the Grand Tour and the voyage of discovery. It also suggested, referring to the work of Herder, that Boswell and Johnson mark an important moment in the conceptualisation of the 'national type', a concept that emerged in a different form in *The Face of Scotland*. In moving from these two writers to the activities of Thomas Cook in the nineteenth century, the chapter moved from a minority aesthetico-ethical practice to the relocation of the tour within the emerging economic and administrative apparatus of the travel company. However, it noted that the eighteenth century concern with individual self-fulfilment remains, but in a new form that embraces the new techniques of communication.

The space in which the tour operated in the nineteenth century is also the space in which the majority of the documentaries produced by the second Films of Scotland Committee operated in the twentieth, a space now fully enmeshed in the practices of consumer capitalism. However, Chapter Six begins by locating the technology of the travelogue within its own archaeology and the 'ways of seeing' it incorporates. This archaeology includes nineteenth technologies of vision such as the stereoscope, the panorama, and the diorama, each of which, like the travelogue, operate a 'panoramic vision' (Bruno, 1993) which transports the viewer to another place, creating a new geography of the world. The pleasure of these technologies has its literary equivalent in the ancient genre of travel writing, which also aimed to bring the reader into 'contact' with a distant culture. The chapter noted that what defines the travelogue as a genre is the particular way in which it oscillates between the discourses of history and ethnography. This oscillation not only serves the purpose of producing different kinds of knowledge about the travelogue's object, its also opens up the relation between discourse and desire. In their collection of cultural groups and historical sites embedded within meaningful narratives, travelogues are engaged in the reproduction of cultural continuity, and the production of a modern national subject.

Fundamentally, the thesis had to break with much of the previous work on documentary film and the representation of Scotland in order to make it possible to examine the



*positivity* of the Films of Scotland documentaries. This break was conceived as a shift in methodology from hermeneutics to archaeology. As an archaeology, the thesis was not so much interested in 'texts' as in 'practices'. This is to transform the way in which we approach our object of study. Films, books, and photographs should be understood not as unified objects but as part of complex cultural technologies. In particular, Scottish documentary film should not be understood as an aesthetic failure to represent the reality of life in Scotland, but as a distinct practice that emerged at a specific historical period, a practice regulated by the rules of formation of the discourses within which it operates. One consequence of this transformation is that the thesis has moved beyond the kinds of epistemic domains with which Foucault was concerned, to extend his methodology to other kinds of domains in which the production of knowledge takes place. In general, I would suggest that we still have much to learn from the application of this archaeological approach to the mass media, a domain in which everyday speech acts are converted into 'the serious', and in which academic speech acts are converted into 'the popular' (Cardiff, 1980).

While the object of our study is the Films of Scotland documentaries, it should be clear that this in no way credits those documentaries with any sort of privileged status within the production of knowledge about Scotland. Similarly, while the latter half of the thesis focused on the travelogue, this is not to suggest that this is the only site in which the types of statement we have been interested in take place. Future research might concern itself with those other areas of human experience that have become the objects of the documentary's scrutiny. Further, the documentary is only one technology amongst many through which human behaviour has come under the surveillance of modern discourse and diverse regimes of power/knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Another such technology would be the population survey, and the battery of questionnaires it employs to map out a range of human practices from consumer preferences to sexual behaviour. A key instance of this technology in practice is its use by the Mass Observation movement, founded by Tom Harrison, in the 1930s.

Ultimately, this thesis has taken us beyond the notion of documentary as a film genre, to an understanding of documentary as a *discursive practice*. Documentary is a technology that stands alongside those other exhibitionary institutions mentioned by Bennett (1988): the museum, the art gallery, and the international exhibition. Documentary has been used within these technologies, but it is also a technology *in its own right*. Bennett argues that these sites 'served as linked sites for the development and circulation of new disciplines (history, biology, art history, anthropology) and their discursive formations (the past, evolution, aesthetics, man) as well as for the development of new technologies of vision' (p. 73). This thesis has mapped out how this is true of the documentary, particularly in its development and circulation of the discursive formations of history and ethnography within the travelogue. Through the reproduction of these discourses, subjects are reminded of the collectivity to which they belong, and in whose interest they serve as national citizens.

The key point however, is that documentary must now be seen as a technology for the production of a distinctly modern *spectacle*. At the centre of this spectacle is the modern subject, increasingly constituted in relation to fields of vision. On the one hand this production may be seen as contributing to 'the society of the spectacle' (Debord, 1976), where every human act and every social relation is mediated and commodified by the communication media, creating a fragmented dispersion of images. In its representation of the picturesque past or spectacular otherness, this is a danger that the travelogue has to negotiate. On the other hand, the documentary may also be seen as contributing to the society of surveillance (Foucault, 1979a), a technology of vision, along with others such as the security camera, which makes the modern subject knowable, and therefore governable.

While both these interpretations have their strengths, I would suggest that they re-present the extreme poles of the range of ways in which the documentary is deployed. Both views, however, have little to say about the crucial contribution of the documentary to the modern public sphere. In the films discussed in this thesis for instance, we have seen the way in which documentaries can both reproduce and interrogate social authority. In particular, I would argue that while the modern subject is frequently surveyed by others, the



documentary allows that subject to survey others too. This is the fundamental link between the Great Exhibition, the museum, the tour, and the documentary with which this thesis has been concerned. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, access to these technologies of vision was restricted to an elite group, invested with the discursive authority to produce different kinds of knowledge. Since the mid-nineteenth century, these technologies have been increasingly available to a general public. Through these technologies of vision, the authority to produce knowledge, to make statements about other times and other cultures, has been radically transformed. This is why the documentary is central to modern public life.

Alongside the documentary, the second aspect of the thesis was the question of the representation of the nation, the imaging of Scotland. In general, it argues that the representation of Scotland must no longer be understood as an aesthetic failure to represent the reality of life in Scotland, but as a set of distinct discursive practices that emerged at a specific historical periods, practices regulated by the rules of formation of the discourses through which they operate. In particular, the thesis attempts to displace the centrality of Romanticism to the debate about Scottishness and the representation of Scotland, arguing that Scottish identity and Scottish culture are not organised on the basis of one dominant cultural formation, but by a variety of cultural technologies and institutional practices, which are themselves often fragmented or contradictory.

Historically the representation, or as I shall suggest the production of Scotland has been dispersed across a plurality of social and cultural practices. This partly explains the space devoted to Martin Martin, and Boswell on Johnson. These writers are part of the archive I was interested in, because they are the earlier surfaces of emergence of the kinds of statement I had identified in *Face of Scotland*. Consequently, they enabled me to establish a fundamental point: that the discursive construction of Scotland is not simply a product of Romanticism, as earlier writers, in their privileging of Romanticism and the works of Sir Walter Scott, have tended to argue. Rather, cultural critics have themselves produced the Tartanry/Kailyard 'tradition of representation' by constituting it as an object of academic discourse. Further, it has been the hegemony of the Tartanry/Kailyard critique, rather than

the alleged hegemony of Tartanry and Kailyard themselves, which critics have struggled to renew. In other words, academics do not simply reflect or comment on the struggle for the meaning of Scotland, they are part of it, they produce Scottishness themselves, often, paradoxically, confirming that which they have set out to critique.

The role of critics in actually producing Scotland and Scottishness themselves is further confirmed by their attribution of a specifically *national* dimension to their invented tradition. In their attempt to isolate and define Scottish national culture, critics have themselves produced a national tradition of representation. In doing so, they have ascribed a distinctiveness to particular cultural formations in Scotland that ignores their existence both south of the border and beyond. One of the key interventions of this thesis has been to challenge the hegemony of this critique, and to break this attribution of national distinctiveness. In doing so, it has demonstrated the importance of acknowledging that acts of national representation work within cultural and discursive formations that are not limited to the national boundary. Crucially however, the thesis's challenge to the orthodox critique of Scottish culture has not been a purely negative exercise, rather, as I have suggested, it has sought to establish how in their manufacture of a Scottish tradition of representation critics have themselves been involved in the production and maintenance of the very idea of Scottish culture itself.

As this suggests, the thesis has not made the alternative mistake of dismissing the notion of the existence of Scottish national culture altogether. National culture has been, and remains, a key term in political and cultural debate. As such, the thesis favours a Gramscian concept of national culture as the shifting product of an ongoing struggle between various cultural producers and institutions (cf. Hall, 1988, p. 53-57). The Films of Scotland Committee, the thesis has argued, were centrally involved in this struggle. What *contains* the plurality of these competing definitions is firstly the geo-political boundaries of the nation itself, an apparently irreducible and permanent point of reference. While they may disagree as to the meaning of Scotland, in particular perhaps to its relationship to the rest of Britain, there is popular consent as to its limits, where both Scotland and Scottishness stop and something else starts. Secondly, the plurality is also contained by the



fact that the definitions of particular producers and institutions achieve dominance over others. In particular, the Films of Scotland Committee occupied a position of some power within this struggle through the institutional support and authority of the State, specifically the Scottish Office, and their alliances with other cultural QUANGOs who, we might suggest, broadly shared their conception of Scottish national culture; one which, for instance, attempted to constitute an articulation between past and present through the construction of specifically Scottish social and cultural traditions. While there were and will always be competing definitions of what constitutes Scottish national culture, the Films of Scotland Committee's definition of the nation as an organic unity with a common past was one, we might suggest, that gained 'ascendancy' and won popular consent. Further, while 1982 saw the demise of Films of Scotland, much of their cultural work, particularly the anchoring or fixing of mimetic capital in physical sites, objects, and environments in the Scottish landscape, continues under the activities of those other national-cultural QUANGOs, McCrone's (1995) 'holy trinity of Scottish heritage' (p. 73), Historic Scotland, The National Trust for Scotland, and the Scottish Tourist Board.

This reconceptualisation of the role of cultural critics has in turn involved a reconsideration of what was, at the start of this thesis, one of its key terms, the concept of representation. The thesis argues that this concept is part of a highly problematic reflectionist discourse, problematic because it rests on a now largely rejected 'depth model' of meaning, and because the concept of representation carries within itself both the charge of misrepresentation and the promise of critical enlightenment. Further, the study of representation has little to say about the use to which cultural products are put by their consumers.

This argument applies not only to the Films of Scotland documentaries, but to contemporary representations of Scotland as well. Let us illustrate this with reference to *Braveheart* (1995), Mel Gibson's epic film of the thirteenth century Scottish freedom fighter William Wallace, a film which achieved international commercial and critical success, and was subject to intense debate in Scotland. What would the reflectionist critique make of a film that exhibits many of the features of Tartanry that the critique of the

representation of Scotland so deplores? Pat Kane (1995, May 18) argues that along with *Rob Roy* (1995), the film's representation of 'the nation as an elemental land of warrior men and wan maidens, of breast-beating heroes fighting the overly-rational English, is the most disempowering cultural image of all' (p. 12). But how does this notion of the film as disempowering explain the fact that both the Scottish National Party and the Scottish Conservatives were engaged in 'a struggle for the soul of the patriot William Wallace' (Kemp, 1995, September 11, p. 13) when the film was released? The critique of the representation of Scotland is simply unable to address the way in which this piece of tartan mythology, far from being alien to political struggle, is in fact appropriated by it, with two political parties involved in a Gramscian struggle to render their interpretation of the film the dominant one.<sup>2</sup> For instance, while Kane argues that such films trivialise the ambitions of 'those of us who want to see Scotland's political potential realised in some form of effective self-government' (p. 12), the Scottish National Party appropriated Wallace's call for 'freedom' for Scotland that featured so heavily in the film and its publicity. For instance, the party distributed a leaflet entitled 'Braveheart' to audiences leaving the film with the message that 'Today it's not just bravehearts who choose independence, it's also wise heads - and they use the ballot box' (Pendreigh, 1995, September 4, p. 12).

This example illustrates the general argument of the thesis that such re-telling of the legends of Scotland's past should be understood as a *productive* practice, constitutive of, rather than disabling for, Scottish national identity. The nostalgia that critics identify in such images serves a key function in the project of constructing a mythic continuity between past and present, a continuity central to the maintenance of national identity. Ironically, this project is explicit in the title of Kane's critique: 'Me Tartan, you chained to past'. What this suggests is that the precise content of the representation of the past is less significant than the project of continually retelling it and articulating a relationship with it,

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<sup>2</sup>It hardly requires a cultural theorist to explain why 'the Scottish National Party relishes this tale of a Scottish hero who defeated the English at Stirling Bridge in 1297' nor why 'the party's anglophobe wing particularly enjoys that scene where Gibson bares his arse at the English army' (Kemp, 1995, p. 12).



of forging a chain between past and present. For instance, on the day of the Scotland v. England football match during Euro 96, the Scottish *Sun* printed a double cover spread of a still from *Braveheart*. The picture was of Wallace and his army lined up to face the English in battle, with the faces of the Scottish football team morphed onto the faces of the men alongside Wallace, and the accompanying title 'Good Luck Bravehearts' (*The Sun*, 1996, June 15, pp. 1 & 40). The fact that many of the players play for rival football teams the rest of the year illustrates the way in which this project of chaining the present to the past is quite specifically a *national* project, that the production of national identity displaces the production of other possible forms of collective identity.

In general then, the central argument of this thesis has been that the Films of Scotland documentaries *produce* Scotland, they bring it into being, constitute it as an object of historical and cultural knowledge. This is clearly a more fundamental activity than representation, which in turn changes our approach to the object of our study, a shift we have characterised as one from interpretation to archaeology. For instance, rather than decoding the deployment of Tartanry and Kailyard in Scottish tourist brochures, we now have to try to understand the more fundamental question of the technology of the tour itself, the discourses it operates within and the institutions that support it, of the tour as a social practice.

In mapping out those discourses, technologies and institutions on which the Films of Scotland draw and within which they operate in their production of knowledge about Scotland, the thesis has therefore shifted the focus of critical attention away from 'texts' to 'practices'. It suggests that books, photographs, and films should be understood not as unified objects but as part of cultural technologies. It should now be clear what we mean by this term. Cultural technology has both a literal, and a metaphorical meaning. It refers to a cultural practice, enabled by particular technologies (the camera, the projector, television), and rooted in earlier technologies (in the case of the travelogue, the panorama, the diorama, and the tour). These usually operate according to a set of rules (of physics, of composition, of ways of seeing) or a particular regimen (of physical activity, of operations upon the self). A cultural technology therefore also involves a particular mode of

behaviour, it evolves into procedures, practices and formulas. A cultural technology allows for the circulation of statements, it gives rise to certain modes of knowledge, to exchanges and communications, it gives rise to relationships between individuals. It is therefore a social practice.

Metaphorically, cultural technology refers to the transformation of experience, it is a technology that transforms or transports its subject (the viewer, reader, practitioner) (to a state of knowledge, a state of awareness, to other spaces, other times, other physical conditions). Cultural technologies are enabled and transformed by shifting socio-historical formations. For instance, since the mid-nineteenth century, various cultural technologies have enabled the expansion of a regime of visibility, as everyday life, past and present, near and far, becomes increasingly available for us to observe, as well as enabling the expansion of the space for those that can occupy the position of the subject within particular discourses. This is the 'exhibitionary complex' (Bennett, 1988) within which the thesis has located the Films of Scotland documentaries.

Through the concept of cultural technologies, a key intervention of this thesis was to re-introduce into Scottish media and cultural studies non-fictional cultural formations, and to place them alongside fictional ones, enabling us to address areas of Scottish culture that have been so far ignored by cultural critics. As we have seen, this involved rejecting the theoretically and historically problematic kind of absolute distinction that Foucault (1972) proposes between institutionally validated autonomous and systematic speech acts and those found in the discourses of popular culture and everyday speech (cf. Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p. 48), and turning Foucault's archaeological method onto precisely this latter public domain, particular the documentary. As we have argued, this is in no way to suggest that this is a privileged domain for the production of knowledge about Scotland and the Scots. Indeed, one of the key advantages in this shift is that it allows us to address the heterogeneity of Scotland's cultural reality. As such, we can only indicate here the direction that future work might take.

For instance, we might carry out an archaeology of mountaineering in Scotland as a



cultural technology, mapping its shifting social and institutional configurations from the emergence of the practice in the late eighteenth century in the field of geology and glaciology (cf. Robbins, 1987), to the explosion of 'Munroing' in Scotland in the early 1980s (Bennett, 1986, p. 1). In the early nineteenth century, the ascent of Scottish mountains is primarily confined to geologists such as MacCulloch and Professor Forbes who, in 1836, was the first recorded person to climb Sgurr nan Gillean in the Cuillins in Skye (MacKenzie, 1982). The mid-nineteenth century sees the expansion of mountaineering, particularly Alpinism, as a leisure practice, with first ascents of nine major Alpine peaks between 1854 and 1860 (cf. Goedeke, 1990). But it is not really until the late nineteenth century that the Scottish mountains become a key site for the activity. We can point to a number of enabling institutions which facilitated this shift: the extension of the Oban railway line to Tyndrum in 1880, with the Fort William Line opening in 1894 (cf. Crocket, 1980, pp. 11-15); the establishment of the Scottish Mountaineering Club in 1889; and the publication in 1891 of Sir Hugh Munro's *Tables of the three thousand foot mountains of Scotland*.

As a cultural technology, three discourses structured Victorian mountaineer's accounts of their activities: scientism, athleticism and Romanticism (Robbins, 1987, pp. 587-593). Mountaineering books in the mid-nineteenth century, argues Robbins, were 'divided into "narrative" and "scientific" sections' (p. 588). This combination of 'the adventure book and the scientific text' (p. 588) produces a similar structure to that of travel writing which, we argued, oscillated between autobiographical narration of the journey itself and scientific description of the natural and cultural environment. Further, as I argued of the recommended physical regimens of *Scotland for Fitness*, the competing discourses within which mountaineering operated were also caught up in wider social debates on both leisure and schooling. Robbins argues that the mountaineering Romantics' critique of athleticism was part of 'more general attacks on the prominence sport had achieved in the public schools and a growing disenchantment with the ideology of athleticism' (p. 592).

Preliminary research suggests that while scientism is now a residual discourse within the practice of mountaineering, athleticism and Romanticism continue to structure the activity.



Towards the end of the twentieth century they have been joined by a subsidiary discourse, which we might at this stage call the discourse of adventure, where adventure is defined as 'an undertaking [which] should include some element of uncertainty' (Carpenter & Priest, 1989, p. 66). This discourse, which incorporates features of both athleticism and Romanticism, is not only produced by climbers themselves in accounts of their activities (cf. Boardman, 1982), but has also come to dominate media accounts of mountaineering in Scotland, particularly since 1993 when a total of fifty four people died in one winter. The key concepts in this discourse are 'risk' and 'competence', where the survival of the walker/climber is seen to be dependent on their ability to correctly perceive these two factors, the ideal balance resulting in what Carpenter and Priest (1989) refer to as a 'peak adventure'. For instance, a newspaper article on deaths in the Scottish hills concludes:

Despite improvements in education and training, experienced walkers and mountaineers insist that total safety is impossible and would be undesirable. "There will always be an element of danger, and that is one of the reasons why climbers and walkers do what they do," Mr Howett [national officer of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland] said. "You want to pitch yourself against nature and to come away having achieved something." (Arlidge & Bennetto, 1993, December 19, p. 3)

Like athleticism and Romanticism, this discourse is limited neither to Scotland nor to mountaineering, but operates within those other leisure pursuits that involve an element of risk and uncertainty as well as technical ability.

In summary then, we can see that the methodological shift from hermeneutics to archaeology engendered a series of shifts in the conceptual framework or field within which we understand the objects of our own discourse. There has been a shift in the nature of the object of our discourse which we have conceived as a shift from texts to practices. This in turn has required us to situate these practices within the shifting social history of their use, and the institutional sites in relation to which they operate, and from which they draw their authority. It has involved a shift from the study of representation to production, a term which allow us to understand the *positivity* of those practices we are studying, and the way in which they actually play a part in bringing things into being, of constituting them as objects of knowledge and practice; the way in which the Films of Scotland documentaries, along with a vast array of other cultural and social practices, including this



thesis itself, bring Scotland and Scottishness into being.

In particular, the thesis has demonstrated that what remains hegemonic in Scottish culture are not in fact particular images and narratives, such as Tartanry or Kailyard, the picturesque landscape or the Glasgow hard man, which are subject to a continuous process of reconfiguration in the hands of cultural producers. What remains hegemonic is the very concept of national culture itself, and the nature, rather than the content, of national identity. In particular, we may note the process whereby national identity is able to continually displace other forms of collective identity based on factors like class or gender. As further evidence of the hegemony of the national we might note the way in which it displaces other forms of geo-political identity such as on the one hand local or regional identity, and on the other European or global identity. In other words, what remains hegemonic at an international level is a particular way of drawing borders around peoples. However, just as this situation has not always been the case in the past, so there are signs of shifts within this hegemony in the future. In the case of Scotland in particular, we may cautiously point towards the likelihood of constitutional change in the near future, resulting in a reconfiguration of the precise dynamics between state and nation.

While Scotland exists outside discourse, as a physical space inhabited by a population, it is only meaningful within discourse, or more accurately a collection of discourses (ethnographic and historical, but also administrative, political, cultural) which produce and regulate Scotland as the object of their various regimes of knowledge. That is, discourses constitute Scotland as meaningful, they produce it as an object of knowledge. This knowledge has, as I have demonstrated, a considerable authority that allows these discourses to constitute Scotland as an irreducible point of reference, an undeniable, common-sense 'truth'. However, this truth, the truth of the very existence of the nation needs to be historicised. In historicising Scotland and Scottishness I have demonstrated not only that the nature of what constituted Scotland or Scottishness has changed across time, but also, more fundamentally, that the very concept of Scotland itself is neither natural nor permanent. There have been other ways of delimiting and administering populations and of understanding and producing collective identities in the past, and there

probably will be in the future.



## **Filmography**

(Where directors credits are not known or not applicable, the first member of the production team to be credited is given.)

### ***Abbreviations***

cam.	camera
d.	director
ed.	editor
exec. p.	executive producer
p.	producer
p.c.	production company
ph.	photography
sc. w	script writer
sp.	sponsor

*Aberdeen: By Seaside and Deeside* (1971) sp. Films of Scotland and the Corporation of the City of Aberdeen, p.c. Templar Films, d. David Gladwell. (22 mins)

*Ayr From the Auld Brig* (1961) sp. Films of Scotland and Royal Burgh of Ayr, p.c. Thomas and Clyde Film Co., d. Stanley Russell. (15 mins)

*Beyond the Grampians* (1963) sp. Films of Scotland and the County Council of Aberdeen, p.c. Templar Films, exec. p. R. Riddell Black. (20 mins)

*The Big Mill* (1963) sp. Films of Scotland and Colvilles Ltd, p.c. Templar Films, d. Laurence Henson. (25 mins)

*Bonnets Over the Border* (1962) sp. Films of Scotland and the National Benzole Company, p.c. Random Productions, ph. Gordon Lang. (19 mins)

*The Borders: Where Scotland and England Meet* (1970) sp. Films of Scotland and the County Councils of Berwick, Northumberland, Peebles, Roxburgh and Selkirk, p.c. Edinburgh Film Productions, d. Mike Pavett. (20 mins)

*Busman's Holiday* (1959) sp. Films of Scotland, Shell-Mex and BP Ltd and Scottish Omnibuses Ltd, p.c. Anglo Scottish Pictures, d. Jim Goding. (1959)

*Castle and Capital* (1980) sp. Films of Scotland, Scottish Film Production Trust, Lothian Regional Council and Edinburgh District Council, p.c. Pelicula Films, d. Mike Alexander. (18 mins)

*Castle and Country* (1964) sp. Films of Scotland and the National Trust for Scotland, p.c. Random Films, d. Shirley Cobham. (30 mins)

*The Children's Story* (1938) sp. Films of Scotland, p.c. Strand Film Company, d. Alexandra Shaw. (15 mins)

*Clydescope* (1974) sp. Films of Scotland and the Clyde Tourist Association, p.c. Viz, d. Murray Grigor. (30 mins)

*County of the Clyde* (1963) sp. Films of Scotland and Lanarkshire Industrial Development Centre, p.c. Anglo Scottish Pictures, d. Gordon Stewart. (19 mins)

- Cruachan* (1966) sp. Films of Scotland and North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board, p.c. Templar Film Studios. (19 mins)
- Dundee* (1939) sp. Films of Scotland, p.c. Scottish Film Production, d. Donald Alexander. (20 mins)
- Dunfermline* (1974) sp. Films of Scotland and the Royal Burgh of Dunfermline, p.c. Pelicula Films, d. Mike Alexander. (20 mins)
- The Edinburgh Festival* (1965) sp. Films of Scotland and the Edinburgh Festival Society, p.c. Campbell Harper Films. (28 mins)
- The Erskine Bridge* (1972) sp. Films of Scotland and the Erskine Bridge Joint Committee, p.c. IFA (Scotland), p. Laurence Henson. (21 mins)
- Enchanted Isles* (1957) sp. Films of Scotland and David MacBrayne Ltd, p.c. Anglo Scottish Pictures, sc.w. Tom Wigge. (17 mins)
- The Face of Scotland* (1938) sp. Films of Scotland, p.c. Realist Film Unit, d. Basil Wright. (14 mins)
- Festival in Edinburgh* (1955) sp. Films of Scotland and Edinburgh Corporation, p.c. Associated British Pathe, d. Douglas Clarke. (14 mins)
- From Glasgow Green to Bendigo* (1958) sp. Films of Scotland and Templeton Carpets Ltd, p.c. Anglo Scottish Pictures, d. Robert Irvine. (19 mins)
- Gardens by the Sea* (1973) sp. Films of Scotland and the Scottish Tourist Board and National Trust for Scotland, p.c. IFA (Scotland), d. Edward McConnell. (30 min)
- Glasgow 1980* (1970) sp. Films of Scotland and Glasgow Corporation, p.c. Ogam Films, d. Oscar Marzaroli. (30 mins)
- The Grand Match* (1981), sp. Films of Scotland and the Scottish Film Production Trust, d. Jon Schorstein. (15 mins)
- The Great Mill Race* (1975) sp. Films of Scotland, p.c. Edinburgh Film Productions, d. Robin Crichton. (30 mins)
- Hand of Adam* (1975) sp. Films of Scotland and the Scottish Arts Council, p.c. Viz, d. Murray Grigor. (34 mins)
- Health of a City* (1965) sp. Films of Scotland and Glasgow Corporation, p.c. Templar Film Studios, p. R. Riddell Black. (26 mins)
- The Heart of Scotland* (1962) sp. Films of Scotland and County Council of the County of Stirling, p.c. Templar Film Studios, d. Laurence Henson. (24 mins)
- Hebridean Highway* (1966) sp. Films of Scotland and David MacBrayne Ltd, p.c. Glasgow Films, cam. Edward McConnell. (20 mins)
- Highland Capital* (1968) sp. Films of Scotland and the Inverness and Loch Ness Tourist Association, p.c. Campbell Harper Films, p. Alan Harper. (20 mins)
- Highland Crafts* (1973) sp. Films of Scotland and Highlands and Islands Development Board, p.c. Ogam Films, d. Oscar Marzaroli. (22 mins)
- Highland Holiday* (1972) sp. Films of Scotland and the Highlands and Islands Development Board, p.c. Ogam Films, d. Oscar Marzaroli. (17 mins)
- Holiday Scotland* (1966) sp. Films of Scotland, p.c. Campbell Harper Films, ed. Henry Cooper. (43 mins)



- Hugh MacDiarmid: No Fellow Travellers* (1972) sp. Films of Scotland and the Scottish Arts Council, p.c. Ogam Films, d. Oscar Marzaroli. (25 mins)
- If Only We Had the Space* (1961) sp. Films of Scotland and the Corporation of Glasgow, p.c. Tree Films, d. Charles Gormley. (16 mins)
- Island of the Big Cloth* (1971) sp. Films of Scotland on behalf of the Harris Tweed Association, p.c. IFA (Scotland), d. Edward McConnell. (22 mins)
- Islands of the West* (1972) sp. Films of Scotland and the Highlands and Islands Development Board, p.c. Tree Films, d. Bill Forsyth. (28 mins)
- Isle of Rhum* (1970) sp. Films of Scotland and the Nature Conservancy, d. Christopher Mylne. (30 mins)
- Kirkcaldy* (1975) sp. Films of Scotland and the Royal Burgh of Kirkcaldy, p.c. Sidhartha Films, d. Steve Clark-Hall. (23 mins)
- A Land Lived In* (1957) sp. Films of Scotland and the National Trust for Scotland, p.c. Campbell Harper Films, d. Alan Harper. (15 mins)
- Loch Lomond* (1967) sp. Films of Scotland, p.c. IFA (Scotland), d. Laurence Henson. (29 mins)
- Lothian Landscape* (1974) sp. Films of Scotland, the County Council of East Lothian and the Town Councils of Dunbar, East Linton, Haddington, North Berwick and Prestonpans, p.c. Pelicula Films, d. Mark Littlewood. (21 mins)
- Mackintosh* (1968) sp. Films of Scotland and the Scottish Arts Council, p.c. IFA (Scotland), d. Murray Grigor. (34 mins)
- Make Way for Steel* (1966) sp. Films of Scotland and Colvilles Ltd, p.c. Templar Film Studios, p. R. Riddell Black. (30 mins)
- Norman MacCaig: A Man in My Position* (1977) sp. Films of Scotland and the Scottish Arts Council, p.c. Pelicula Films, d. Michael Alexander. (31 mins)
- Over the Sea to Skye* (1961) sp. Films of Scotland and Skye Tourist Association, p.c. Anvil Films, d. Hans Nieter. (18 mins)
- Perthshire Panorama* (1959) sp. Films of Scotland and Perth Town and County Councils, p.c. Anglo Scottish Pictures. (22 mins)
- A Place in the Country* (1972) sp. Films of Scotland and the County Council of Renfrew p.c. Tree Films. (22 mins)
- Places... or People: Environmental Improvement in Glasgow* (1975) sp. Films of Scotland and the Department of Environmental Improvement and City of Glasgow District Council, p.c. Tree Films, d. Charles Gormley. (22 mins)
- Prospect of Scotland* (1975) sp. Films of Scotland and the Scottish Council for Development and Industry, p.c. Viz, d. Murray Grigor. (28 mins)
- Royal Stirling* (1972) sp. Films of Scotland, Stirling Town Council, Stirling University and National Trust for Scotland, p.c. Campbell Harper Films, d. Mark Littlewood. (23 mins)
- St. Andrews by the Northern Sea* (1974) sp. Films of Scotland and Royal Burgh of St. Andrews, p.c. Pelicula Films, d. Mark Littlewood. (23 mins)



- St. Kilda, the Lonely Islands* (1967) sp. Films of Scotland and the National Trust for Scotland, d. Christopher Mylne. (38 mins)
- Scotland Dances* (1957) sp. Films of Scotland and the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, p.c. Campbell Harper Films, d. Alan Harper. (14 mins)
- Scotland for Fitness* (1938) sp. Films of Scotland, p.c. Gaumont British Instructional, d. Brian Salt. (11 mins)
- Sea Food* (1938) sp. Films of Scotland, p.c. Pathe Film Company Productions. (12 mins)
- Seawards the Great Ships* (1960) sp. Films of Scotland, Clyde Shipbuilders' Association and Central Office of Information, p.c. Templar Films, d. Hilary Harris. (30 mins)
- Sir Walter Scott: the Practical Romantic* (1969) sp. Films of Scotland, Bank of Scotland, Royal Bank of Scotland, British Linen Bank, Clydesdale Bank, p.c. Anvil Films. (23 mins)
- A Song for Prince Charlie* (1959) sp. Films of Scotland and the Drambuie Liqueur Company, p.c. Anvil Films, d. Hans Nieter. (18 mins)
- Sorley Maclean's Island* (1974) sp. Films of Scotland and the Scottish Arts Council, p.c. Ogam Films, d. Douglas Eadie. (22 mins)
- The Spirit of Scotland* (1979) sp. Films of Scotland on behalf of Long John International, p.c. IFA (Scotland). (20 mins)
- Sport in Scotland* (1938) sp. Films of Scotland, p.c. Scottish Film Production, d. Stanley Russell. (10 mins)
- The Sun Pictures* (1965) sp. Films of Scotland and the Scottish Arts Council, p.c. Campbell Harper Films, d. David Bruce. (15 mins)
- Tayside* (1974) sp. Films of Scotland and the Tayside Development Authority, p.c. Ogam Films, d. Oscar Marzaroli. (29 mins)
- They Made the Land* (1938) sp. Films of Scotland, p.c. Gaumont British Instructional, d. Mary Field. (20 mins)
- Three Scottish Painters* (1963) sp. Films of Scotland, Scottish Committee of the Arts Council, the British Council, p.c. Templar Film Studios, d. Laurence Henson. (22 mins)
- A Town Called Ayr* (1974) sp. Films of Scotland and the Royal Burgh of Ayr, p.c. Pelicula Films, d. Mark Littlewood. (20 mins)
- The Water of Life* (1972) sp. Films of Scotland and William Grant and Sons Ltd, p.c. IFA (Scotland). (17 mins)
- Water, Water Everywhere* (1967) sp. Films of Scotland, p.c. IFA (Scotland), d. Edward McConnell. (26 mins)
- Wealth of a Nation* (1938) sp. Films of Scotland, p.c. Scottish Film Productions, d. Donald Alexander. (17 mins)
- Weave me a Rainbow* (1969) sp. Films of Scotland and the National Association of Scottish Woolen Manufacturers, p.c. Templar Film Studios, d. Edward McConnell. (30 mins)



## **Availability**

All of the documentaries, in a variety of formats, are held in the Scottish Film Archive, Dowanhill, 74 Crescent Road, Glasgow G12 9JN. A number of the films can be hired, but some are currently only available for viewing in the Archive.

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